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**THE ROLE OF SELF ON ETHICAL CONSUMPTION IN A
RELIGIOUS CULTURE: A CASE OF CONSUMER IN
THAILAND**

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The Role of Self on Ethical Consumption in a Religious Culture:
A Case of Consumers in Thailand

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Abstract

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The Role of Self on Ethical Consumption in a Religious Culture: A Case of Consumers in Thailand

Keywords: self-concept, ethical consumption, self-ethics congruency, religiosity, moral self, moral identity

This thesis explores the role of the self-concept on ethical consumption behaviour within the Thai consumer context. Religiosity has an influence on a person's self and morality as Thai people place high importance on religious values. Ten consumers are studied through in-depth, phenomenological interviews, focusing on ethical consumption experiences and meanings. The self-concept is viewed as an experiencer and a moral entity that is dynamic and contextual between internal and external values.

The study has extended knowledge on the self-concept and self-image congruency in the context of ethical consumption. It found the existence of a self-ethics relationship through processes of internalisation and externalisation. Personal value, emotion, moral salience, religious beliefs and social values are internalised into the self-concept. On the other hand, externalisation allows consumers to express personal meanings onto society. Self-monitoring functions in these processes to control ethical behaviour. Ethical consumption helps consumers to construct and enhance moral identity, underpinned by the moral self.

This thesis has found self-ethics congruency, where meanings of the self and ethical consumption are symbolised and encouraging ethical consumption. Moreover, the multidimensional self has emerged from the study. This finding

offers insights on different aspects of the self-concept through ethical consumption. Consumers intuitively engage in ethical consumption when emotion is involved. The implications of this study suggest “who ethical consumers are” by looking at the consumer’s self. Organisations and marketers can use different selves and moral identity to segment and target potential ethical consumers while creating brand image corresponding to consumer’s self-image.

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Chapter 1

Introduction:

This research is entitled “the Role of Self on Ethical Consumption in a Religious Culture: A Case of Consumers in Thailand”. In particular, it aims to understand the relationship between the self-concept and ethical consumption, and the meanings associated with such consumption in the Thai religious context. This chapter provides an introduction to the thesis by offering an overview of the research background and its context (section 1.1), together with a rationale for investigating the role of the self in ethical consumption behaviour. The objectives and research questions are also identified and stated (section 1.2). Then, the expected contributions are briefly outlined (section 1.3), and finally the structure of the thesis, including detail on the contents of each chapter, is described (section 1.4). Figure 1.1 presents the structure of the introductory chapter.

1.1 Ethical consumerism and ethical market in Thailand

Modern technology and development has made our lives more convenient, but we cannot deny that it has also deteriorated our natural resources and environment (Gross, 1997). This is also true in Thailand: because of the impact of rapid modernisation and economic progress in today's Thai society, people have been encountering declining environmental conditions and lower social quality (Sathirathai and Piboolsravut, 2004). It has been reported that there was an increased use of pesticides and fertilizers per hectare of cultivated land from 7 kg and 0.3 kg, respectively, in 1961, to 183 kg and 2.6 kg in 1999 (DAE, 1961; OAE, 1999). As a result, people are being affected from the overuse of

chemicals for cultivation in terms of their health and the health of their communities. To some degree, this has evoked consumers to turn the blame for these irresponsible actions (e.g. use of hazardous chemical products) onto manufacturers and excessive consumption (ITC, 2009).

In response to the high levels of pesticide residues in Thailand, consumers have begun to demand for “safe”, “responsible”, and “ethical” products (e.g. Schobesberger et al., 2008). Moreover, consumers are becoming more environmentally conscious. One empirical study conducted in Thailand indicated that with the increasing environmental concern has resulted in a growing green market (i.e. which is one element of the ethical markets considered in this thesis) for cosmetics and toiletries from both local and international companies, such as Oriental Princess and The Body Shop respectively (Johri and Sahasakmontri, 1998). On the consumer side, this social concern has provided a great market opportunity for ethical products and ethical consumption. This is exemplified by figures from the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), which have indicated that Thai export sales for organic agriculture were 51 million euros in 2009, with the increasing organic agriculture land increasing by 3.9% from 2012 to 2013 (FiBL and IFOAM, 2015). These have resulted from the rise of ethical consumerism in Thailand (e.g. consumer awareness towards organic production methods). As organic products are considered in this thesis as part of ethical consumption, exploring ethical consumption in the Thai consumer context could shed some light on this emerging ethical market.

During the 1997 Asian financial crisis in 1997 that arose from poor corporate governance, by which Thailand was intensely affected, business ethics began to attract increasing interest from the public. In response to the crisis, “ethics institutes” were formed by the Bank of Thailand, the Security and Exchange Commission, and the Stock Exchange of Thailand in order to educate executives on the concept of business ethics (Sila-On, 1999). Large-scale businesses recognised the need for ethics in their corporate culture in terms of affirming fairness to all stakeholders, revealing reliable corporate and financial information, developing effective internal control systems, and focusing on the firm’s value instead of the managers’ self-interest (Racela, 2012). Then, in the early 2000s, consumers began to become more aware of corporate actions and to protest against unethical acts from businesses. This can be seen, for example, in the 2003 boycott by Thai consumers of Nestlé for making genetically modified products (Racela, 2012). It is possible that consumers will come to be considered as one of the key stakeholders, from whom businesses need to build trust through genuineness and sincere ethical offerings (ITC, 2009).

With respect to ethics in business in the Thai context, most studies have focused the firm or the manager side (e.g. Singhapakdi et al., 2008; Singhapakdi et al., 2000a; Marta et al., 2012). Particularly in today’s environment of rapid information-sharing, mass and social media have made it easier for consumers to point out ethical and unethical actions of firms. Hence, more research on ethics needs to be undertaken from the consumer perspective in order to implement business ethics in a consumer-oriented manner. Fukukawa (2003) suggested that consumer ethics should be studied with regard to its own nature and terms, and that a more holistic framework of

ethical decision-making in consumption still needs to be developed. Thus, conducting an investigation of consumer experiences with ethical consumption using consumer reflection and stories will allow the current research to delineate a comprehensive and well-rounded conceptual framework of the phenomenon, especially for the Thai consumer context.

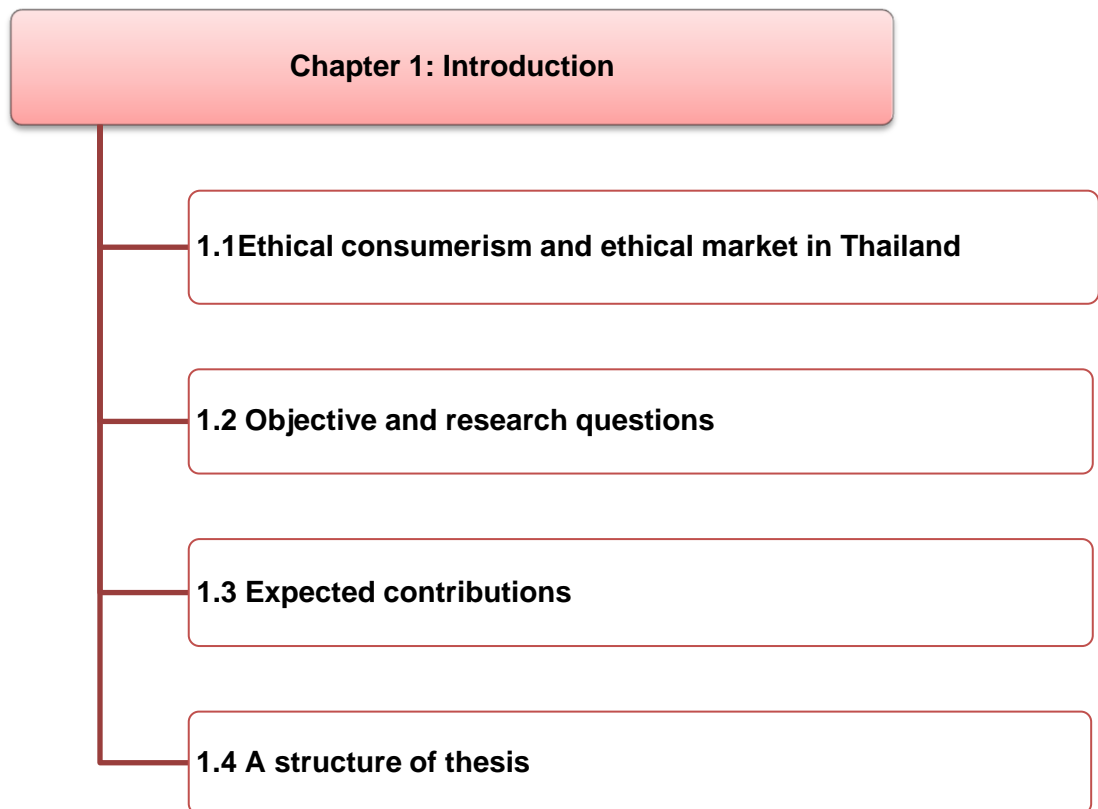
Furthermore, in this thesis it is suggested that one way to discover the consumer ethics of a person is to look at their self-concept. In marketing, many researchers have adopted the self-concept to analyse consumer behaviour in line with the idea of *we are what we have* (e.g. Belk, 1988; Sirgy, 1982; Hogg and Michell, 1996; Hogg and Banister, 2001; Mittal, 2006). Although it seems that studies on the self and consumers have long been conducted, there is still room for the self to be explored within the context of ethics and consumption. This is because most previous studies have investigated the self-concept using high-value products, fashion items, branding, and other conventional consumer goods. For example, there have been empirical studies within contexts such as computers and jeans (Quester et al., 2000), fashion clothing (Hogg and Banister, 2001), car brands and motor vehicles (Landon, 1974; Heath and Scott, 1998; Kressmann et al., 2006), and branded products (Ross, 1971; Graeff, 1996). Therefore, the central focus of this thesis is to employ the self-concept regarding consumer ethics research. It draws upon self-concept theory, which suggests that people usually act in ways that sustain and enhance their self-concept, particularly in the way they purchase or use the products (Graeff, 1996).

Within Thailand, religion is considered to have an impact on one's morals and ethics. Thai people tend to live their lives religiously, particularly with respect to

Buddhism; at the very least, Thai people are usually influenced by the fundamental Buddhist concepts of “non-harming” and “middle path” (i.e. moderation) (Gross, 1997). From this standpoint, Buddhism supports ethical consumption behaviour through its teachings (i.e. both intellectual and spiritual resources). However, other religions are also freely practised in Thailand, such as Christianity, Muslim, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Sikhism (Singhapakdi et al., 2000a). Although different religions might be pertinent to consumer ethics research and cannot be ruled out, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to contextualise all religions in depth. Regardless of the specific religion in question, it could be claimed that there is a close connection between ethics and religion, especially in the Thai ethical context.

Laying out the research background and context has pinpointed the current research focus and its related issues. Understanding of the ethical marketplace in Thailand will facilitate formulation of the research objectives and research questions, which are grounded in the self-concept.

Figure 1.1: A structure of introduction – Chapter 1



1.2 Objectives and research questions

The main objectives of the research are to explore the self as manifested in ethical consumption, to contextualise the meanings of ethical consumption through consumers' lived experiences (based on a phenomenological approach), to extend the self-image congruency model (Grubb and Garthwohl, 1967; Sirgy, 1982a) into the ethical consumption context, to examine the impact of religiosity on consumers' ethical beliefs, ethical consumption decisions, and the notion of self, and to study the processes involved when consumers monitor their sense of self and consumption behaviour for ethical purposes. Ontologically, the reality reflected by this research is perceived as a dynamic and complex social phenomenon. In that, "*being in the world*" (Crotty, 1998) is taken into account as the reality that cannot be separated from its context. So, not only is the focus on the "self" and ethical consumption decision congruency, but

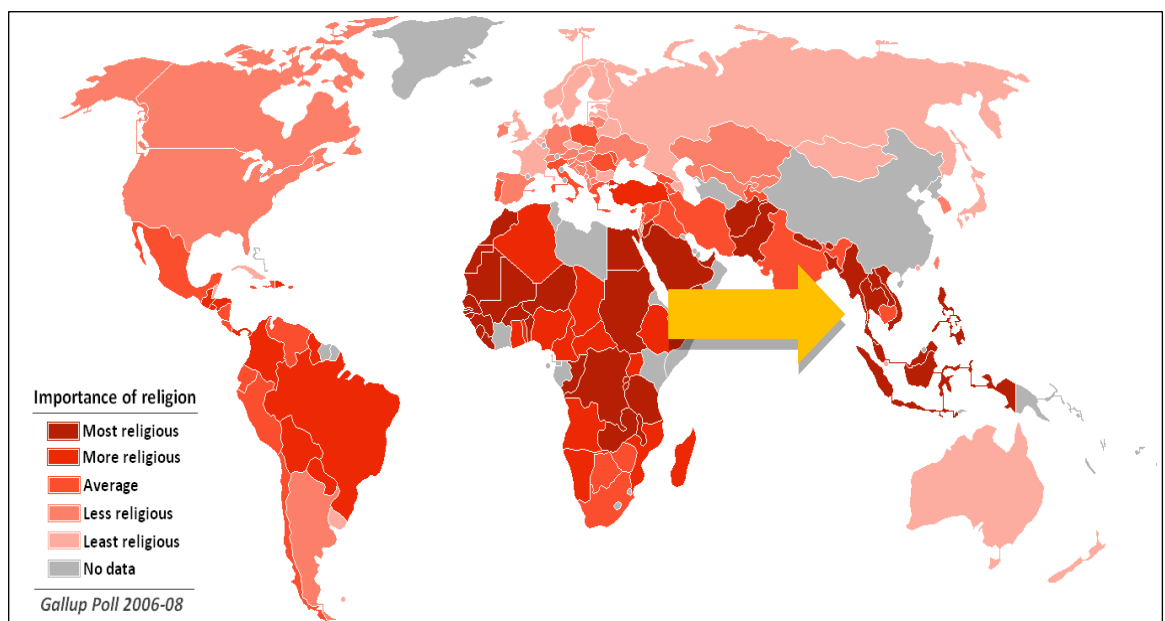
its associations and emergent meanings are also explored, allowing some flexibility for individuals' behaviour within an open social system (i.e. there are interactions between internal and external elements).

Because religiosity plays such a crucial role in relation to consumer ethics and ethical behaviour (Allport and Ross, 1967; Vitell et al., 2001; Vitell and Paolillo 2003; Vitell et al., 2009; Clark and Dawson, 1996), the current thesis attempts to explore religious values and ethical consumption. Thailand has been selected as the data source, as there is a high intensity of religiosity in the country (see, Figure 1.2), where Buddhism is the core source of moral beliefs among Thai people (Singhapakdi et al., 2000b; Wongtada et al., 1998). According to Wongtada et al. (1998), Buddhism is by its nature stricter than other religions (in term of code of ethics), and emphasises the co-existence of man and nature to promote a peaceful mind and kindness, as well as the concept of moderation: i.e. consume moderately, live moderately, and relate moderately (Singhapakdi et al., 2000b). However, the focus of this research is not on a particular type of religion; rather, it makes use of the general term "religiosity", in order to not to limit itself to the specific principles within one religion. It should be noted that although religiosity impacts on morals and ethical consumer behaviour, this does not mean that religiosity is the only source of morality in this research – rather, it is one source of morality, albeit an important one.

As mentioned earlier, far too little attention has been paid to the self-concept in relation to ethical consumption in the area of consumer ethics. In particular, knowledge of the South East Asian context surrounding the self-concept and ethics is still limited (Singhapakdi et al., 2000a), by which most previous studies on non-western ethics have examined the perspective from a general point of

view. Among the limited Asian contexts, such as in Thailand, of the business ethics research, the main focus has been on the ethical attitude and questionable behaviour of managers (Singhapakdi et al., 1990, 1991, 1994, 2000a), not the consumer perspective. Therefore, there is still a gap in business ethics with respect to the ethics of consumption and consumers' voices, especially in the Asian context. The current research, then, aims to close this gap in the consumer ethics literature, whilst generating an insightful understanding of ethical consumption through the self-concept of Thai consumers.

Figure1.2: Strong religiosity in Thailand



Source: www.gallup.com

In order to achieve those objectives, this thesis seeks to address the following questions:

- What is the role of the “self” in ethical consumption?
 - What are the key factors affecting one’s self-concept?
 - How is the concept of self affected by ethical consumption?

- What is the difference between the actual self and the ideal self in relation to ethical consumption?
- Does “self-image congruence” apply in the context of ethical consumption, and if so, in what ways do consumers integrate the self into the meanings (or image) of ethical consumption?
- How does religiosity influence ethical consumption?
- How does self-monitoring impact one’s self-concept and ethical consumption patterns?

As this thesis intends to explore the role of the self-concept (including other self-related elements) in relation to ethical consumption, it first needs to view how the self is shaped in this context. In this respect, the self is contextualised through lived experiences. Having acknowledged that there are different dimensions of the self-concept, the actual self and the ideal self are highlighted with regard to experiences of ethical consumption. Importantly, in order to adopt the self-image congruency model (Grubb and Garthwohl, 1967; Sirgy, 1982a) in the context of ethical consumption, the study takes into account whether, and in what ways, the self (particularly self-image) is in line with the meanings or image of such consumption experiences. This, in turn, will address the extent to which self-image congruence facilitates ethical behaviour. To examine the influence of religiosity on ethical consumption, religious values and beliefs are studied in terms of their impact on the self and ethical decisions. This allows the current research to understand the ethics and ethical consumption behaviour of consumers who have nurtured and lived in a religious environment. As consumers in Thailand hold strong religious values (as indicated in Figure 1.2), the self-concept will be influenced by this, at least to some extent. Thus, apart from exploring the self through ethical consumption, this thesis also investigates

how religiosity affects concepts of the self, morality to the self, and meanings that consumers ascribe to ethical consumption. Lastly, in order to discover how ethical behaviour is controlled within a person, the effect of self-monitoring on this phenomenon is studied.

This research ultimately aims to contribute extended and new knowledge to the existing literature on consumer ethics and consumer behaviour (e.g. Cherrier, 2007, 2005; Szmingin et al., 2009; Reed et al., 2007). There are two types of contributions that are expected: theoretical and conceptual contributions. There are also marketing and managerial implications that the study intends to make for real practices. The following section also justifies the research focus and indicates how the results in this thesis contribute theory, concept, and practice.

1.2 Expected contributions

This study seeks to shed greater light on the notion of self through ethical consumption and influence of religiosity. It also aims to gain insights on meanings of ethical consumption experiences that are given from the first-person (i.e. ethical consumer) perspective. The self plays a critical role in this sense as it is seen as an experiencer and a moral entity, giving meanings to the self-concept and ethical consumption phenomenon. Herein, the theoretical and conceptual contributions are focused to advance the understanding of such relationships and its contexts. It is also worth noting that the theoretical contribution is related to a set of concepts and theories used in this study to define and explain such phenomenon (i.e. the self-concept and ethical consumption). Drawing from this, the conceptual contribution is the ideas deriving from particular focused models (e.g. self-image congruency model) and concepts (e.g. the self-concept, self-monitoring, and religiosity) that provide

ways of exploring the self-ethics relationship within the Thai context. Strauss and Corbin (1994, p.264) also discuss on theories and concepts in the way that “theory consists of plausible relationships produced among concepts and sets of concept (further detail on this distinctive; see Silverman (2001)).

Potential theoretical contribution

As mention earlier, this study extends the self-concept (Rosenberg, 1979; Sirgy, 1982a) and self-image congruence (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; Grubb et al., 1967) into the context of ethical consumption, which highlights the substantive issues associated with the relationship of the self, morality, and ethical consumption. Self-concept has long existed in the marketing and consumer research literature (e.g. Vitz and Johnson, 1965; Grubb and Stern, 1971; Sirgy, 1982a; Markus and Nurius, 1986; Wright et al., 1992; Hogg and Michell, 1996; Sirgy et al., 2000), but there is still insufficient discussion about the self in consumer ethics, particularly the ethical consumption. Although there have been some attempts to investigate the self in business ethics and consumer ethics areas (e.g. Vitell, 2003; Shaw and Shiu, 2002; Cherrier, 2007; Kavak et al., 2009), the notion of self (including aspects of the self; e.g. self-image, possible selves) has not yet been explicitly explored and reflected meanings given to ethical consumption. Thus, this thesis intends to highlight the relationship between the self-concept and ethical consumption, in which the self is studied from different aspects and dimensions.

Meanings and symbols come into effect between the self and consumption. According to Grubb and Grathwohl (1967), products are a means of communication that provide symbolic meanings to consumers, by which “self-image congruency” model is proposed to link between self-image and product-

image. This model has not been explored in the area of consume ethics. In this respect, this study seeks to address this gap in the literature through the ethical consumption context. So self-image and image and meanings of ethical consumption (including ethical products) are examined to gain the insights of the self-image congruency in the ethical context.

The current holds the idea that individuals tend to behave in accordance with how they monitor their behaviour, especially the ethical behaviour. In this, self-monitoring is also central to the research focus. Synder and Gangestad (1986) highlighted the relationship between self-monitoring and expressive behaviour as the way that people observe and control their behaviour. In the ethical context, there have been some attempts to investigate the behavioural control factor, such as self-monitoring (e.g. Kavak et al., 2009, Glover et al., 2007), self-control (Vitell et al., 2009). However, the results were inconsistent with regard to its effect on the ethical behaviour. The current study sees this as an opportunity to examine self-monitoring in relation to the self and ethical consumption behaviour. In turn, the study expects to underline how ethical behaviour is monitored through one's self that can enhance the tendency of ethical consumption engagement.

Potential conceptual contribution

This study fundamentally views our society is more fluid that there is flexibility in ways of lives, beliefs and people's actions and these can somehow change during lived experience. From this viewpoint, it supports the ideas of Szmigin et al. (2009) who adopted a flexible approach to study ethical behaviour and Cherrier (2005) who employed existential phenomenology to ethical consumption. Regarding the self-concept, it has been heavily investigated using

the social-cognitive approach (e.g. Hogg and Garrow, 2003; Hosany and Martin, 2011; Graff, 1996). These studies have not focused on the self that is inferred and reflected through lived experiences. Herein, the phenomenological paradigm of the self-concept is adopted as to gain a greater understanding of ethical consumption behaviour and the self through consumer experiences. This in turn allows both internal and external values related to such phenomenon to move along people's lives. So this study takes into account both the psychological and social constructs with respect to meanings of experience from the first-person description. Therefore, this thesis conceptualises the relationship between one's self-concept and ethical consumption through lived experiences, meanings (and new emergent meanings), and contexts of such consumption experiences.

Different dimensions of self are explored in this research context. Consumer researchers have adopted single, dual, and multiple self in their studies (Sirgy, 1982a; Karanika and Hogg, 2010; Hogg and Michell, 1996). As the current study views the self as dynamic and contextual, the multi-dimension of self is adopted. In this respect, it enables this study to explore from different aspects (e.g. the inner self and the social-related self). This in turn allows this thesis to reflect multiple layers of the ethical consumer and their consumption behaviour. It aims to extend the multidimensional concepts of self in the consumer ethics context.

Religiosity has been emphasised its impacts on ethical behaviour and decision (e.g. Vitell, 2009; Clark and Dawson, 1996; Vitell et al., 2001). Some previous studies also have linked religiosity with self-elements, such as moral identity (e.g. Waver and Agle, 2002, Vitell et al., 2009). Vitell et al. (2009) indicated that

moral identity is a source of moral motivation in which religiosity develops moral identity. Taken together, the current study sees the link between consumer's morality and religiosity. The concept of self can be affected from this link concerning ethical issues. Moreover, religious values and beliefs are expected to be seen among the Thai consumers as they place strong values on religion (as shown in Figure 1.2). With strong religiosity in the Thai consumer context, the study also focuses on how religiosity influences the self, lifestyles and beliefs. This allows this study to relate religiosity to the concept of the self and people's lives.

Regarding relationship between the self and ethics, previous studies have included the moral identity not only to religiosity. Aquino and Reed (2002), for instance, also investigated the moral identity to explain moral behaviours. As the current study attempts to explore one's moral through the self, the moral identity is seen to reflect a concept of self and ethical values. Therefore, the moral identity is also focused, in which it is taken into account as part of the overall self-concept. From this viewpoint, the current study can provide insights of how the self and the moral identity are operationalised within the self and ethics relationship.

Marketing and managerial implications

With the relationship between the self and ethical consumption, the current study can provide the knowledge of the consumer's concept of self, consumer ethics, and ethical behaviour patterns. From this, organisations can gain an understanding of ethical consumers in terms of the self, the moral identity, and meanings of ethical consumption given from consumer perspective. Organisations might use the findings in this research to address consumer's

moral dilemma that happen in the marketplace. In so doing, the moral identity might need to be emphasised from products. For example, consumers who identify themselves as caring and fair might search for products that serve their identities. Organisations might need to satisfy these needs by offering a product that creates a “helping” or “fair” sense. This would be useful particularly when organisation is related to ethical and green market. Different dimensions of self might result in different ethical consumption patterns. Organisation might utilise this by, for example, developing a product that can serve the consumer’s actual self and ideal self. This is because a person is likely to have and choose a product according to one’s self. Products that can help consumers to reflect or improve on who they are, such as being a good, responsible person, can be created by incorporating the idea of corporate social responsibility within the products (e.g. recycled and energy-saving products).

Marketers would also have a better understanding of ethical consumers. With the different dimensions of the self and the moral identity, marketers can use these findings to segment and target the potential customers, especially for the ethical market. Marketers can launch marketing campaigns of ethical products (e.g. fairtrade products, organic food, non-animal testing product, eco-products) that encourage a sense of moral within a person, by incorporating values that impact on one’s moral self, such as religious values. As the study applies the self-image congruency in this context, marketers can gain insights of the symbolic meanings associated with ethical consumption as well as the self-image of the consumers. With such insights, they are able to market ethical products more effectively by creating images of ethical products that are closely linked to the consumer’s self-image.

Apart from businesses, this study can provide grounds for the Thai government and social service organisation to review the ethical behaviour of Thai consumers through their consumption patterns and the self. Influential factors of one's morality and the self that will be found in the study could help the government and social services to plan a programme that encourages ethics among Thai consumers. Different types of selves would show different types of a person that in turn perceives ethics differently. This would result in different patterns of ethical consumption. The government can utilise these findings to motivate ethical consumption in different situations.

1.3 A structure of thesis

The next chapter presents literature review in chapter two that provides an overview of the extant literatures on the self-concept and ethical consumption. It begins by laying out the historical account of self-concept from different paradigms and dimensions of self. At the end it concludes that the current research intends to employ the phenomenological approach when exploring the self-concept. From this standpoint, both psychological elements and social interaction are reviewed as well as their influences and associations with the self and the ethical consumption relationship.

Accordingly in chapter two, the self-concept is brought into the consumer domain, focusing on consumer behaviour. Relevant matters relating to self-concept and an individual's consumption behaviour are discussed, including possessions, significant others, and social interaction. Once these factors are examined, the literature moves on to the theory and empirical studies of the congruence between self-concept and product image. Product symbolism and consumption meanings are focused to lay out the idea of how one's self-

concept is congruent with the product image. Then, the self-concept is reviewed in relation to ethics and ethical consumption. The contextual focus of the study is delineated first by defining ethics, and then by considering ethics in consumption. As considering one's ethics, the literature includes religiosity and moral identity. This brings the self into a context of ethical consumption. To focus on how consumers control their ethical behaviour, self-monitoring is discussed regarding its impacts on the self and consumer behaviour. Particularly, the Thai ethical context is studied regarding religion, the philosophy of sufficiency economy, and social norms. These factors have been highlighted their relationships with ethical consumption in the consumer ethics literature. Some important gaps in the literature are identified, in which it gives opportunities for the research direction to be focused at the end.

Chapter three introduces the research methodology and method that the current research adopts in order to explore self-concept and ethical consumption phenomenon. This chapter offers the worldview as a fundamental paradigmatic position of the current research. Based on the constructive worldview with the emphasis of *being in the world* (Crotty, 1998), it underpins the concept of existential phenomenology as to be used in this research. Some relevant assumptions of the existential phenomenological approach are discussed, including the intentionality of consciousness, presuppositions and natural attitudes, and the comparison between the concepts of existentialism and existential phenomenology. Then, the research strategy that is implemented to conduct phenomenological in-depth interviews is introduced. The chapter addresses matters, such as sampling, recruiting and selection process, phenomenological interview technique, translation, ensuring 'trustworthy' data, roles of the researcher, and ethics in research.

Chapter four presents the findings collected during the interviews from 10 participants. It starts by introducing a profile of all participants through demographics, self-portraits, and how the participants understand ethics and ethical consumption. Crucial shared meanings of ethics and ethical consumption are highlighted. With respect to the existential phenomenological perspective, actual experiences in ethical consumption are displayed in relation to different contexts of ethical consumption, such as environmental concerns, animal welfare, fair organisation, sufficiency economy, locally sourced products, charity, and product copyrights. Then, it shows how the self-concept manifested in the context of ethical consumption. Dimensions of the self (i.e. actual self and ideal self) are presented in relation to ethical consumption. The study also recognises some changes in the self in this context.

Chapter five emphasises the findings on external and social elements that are involved in the self-concept and ethical consumption. It presents an influence of religion on ethical consumption and the self. Significant others and society also impacts on the self and one's ethical consumption behaviour. Then, the findings reveal how self-monitoring is functioned in the ethical consumption context.

Chapter six provides the discussion of the findings presented in chapter five. Meanings of ethical consumption gained from the participants are discussed. Ethical consumption is seen as a form of virtue ethics and symbolic consumption. The chapter discusses further on how one's self-concept impacts on ethical consumption. Self-motives, including self-esteem and self-consistency, are highlighted in relation to self and its dimensions. With the self-ethics relationship, the moral self and the moral identity are discussed, in which moral salience and emotion seem to be relevant in the context.

With a focus on social influence, the discussion on social interaction is conducted to emphasise its impacts on the self and people's ethics. Theoretically, the congruency between self-image and ethical product image is explored in more details. This chapter also introduces the "self-ethics congruency" which suggests that self-image congruency model (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967) can be extended into this context. As religion plays a crucial part in creating a moral self and decisions on ethical consumption, the role of religiosity is discussed, especially in the Thai context. Last, self-monitoring is argued to utilise as guiding or reminding the ethical decision, but not a direct influence on an individual's ethical consumption.

Finally, a conclusion to this thesis is included in chapter seven. It summarises the current research by offering the research contributions as well marketing and managerial implications. Regarding the research limitations presented, it gives research direction for conducting future research. This chapter ends with a closing remark.

Chapter 2

Literature Review:

2.1 Introduction

This chapter captures and identifies gaps in the existing literature in relation to the current research focus. The main purpose of the literature review is to address the role of the self-concept in relation to ethical consumption, where religion has been placed with strong values among consumers (as linked to the research questions in section 1.2.) To review this phenomenon, it needs to understand how the self-concept has been defined and developed, the self-concept is reviewed from different paradigms and dimensions. This lays out a foundation of the self-concept study from different schools of thought. Prior exploring the role of self, it is critical to know what shapes the self, in this sense; influential factors affecting the self-concept are focused. Once empirical studies have focused, reviews on theoretical concepts relating to the self are included. In this study, theory of self-image congruence (Grubb and Garthwohl, 1967; Sirgy, 1982a) is the main focus. Then, the self-concept is reviewed through ethical consumption. In this respect, it highlights how the self plays its role in the ethical context. Within this context, ethics in consumption, religiosity, and moral identity are explored. As this study recognises that ethical behaviour might need to be controlled, so self-monitoring is also reviewed regarding its effect on the self and ethical consumption. Following this, the literature particularly focused on the Thai consumer context relating to the phenomenon studied.

To this end, four main areas are discussed: (1) the self-concept, (2) the self-concept in an ethical consumption context, (3) self-monitoring and (4) Thai

consumer context. Section 2.2 will mainly discuss the self-concept, including its paradigms (section 2.2.1) and dimension (section 2.2.2). In section 2.2.1, the self-concept is reviewed from six paradigms, such as introspective (James, 1890), trait (Roger, 1959), behavioural (Bagozzi, 1980; Reed, 2002), psychoanalytic (Freud, 1923, 1946), social-cognitive (Kihlstrom and Klein, 1994), phenomenological (Snygg and Combs, 1949), and symbolic-interactive (Cooley, 1902) approaches with particular focus on their distinctions. Viewing the self-concept with reference to different schools of thought or different paradigms can arrange the fragmented and highly diffused self-concept (Sirgy, 1982) into a more organised area. Each paradigm provides a distinct notion of the self-concept and relevant issues, which in turn direct the research assumption and scope.

Section 2.2.2 discusses dimensions of the self-concept with respect to single, dual, and multiple self-constructs, and explore how previous consumer researchers have referred to and treated the self-concept. Previous studies have adopted different dimensions of the self-concept, however it has been recognised that the majority of consumer studies have operationalised the self-concept into actual and ideal self (see, for example, Belch and Landon, 1977; Ericksen, 1996; Quester et al., 2000). As found in empirical studies, the dimensions of the self-concept are meant to explain and predict behaviour.

Section 2.2.3 describes various influential factors that can shape one's self in relation to consumption. By incorporating the self-concept into consumption, the self-concept itself, as well as product image, can be brought into focus (Ross, 1971; Sirgy, 1982a; Hogg and Michell, 1996).

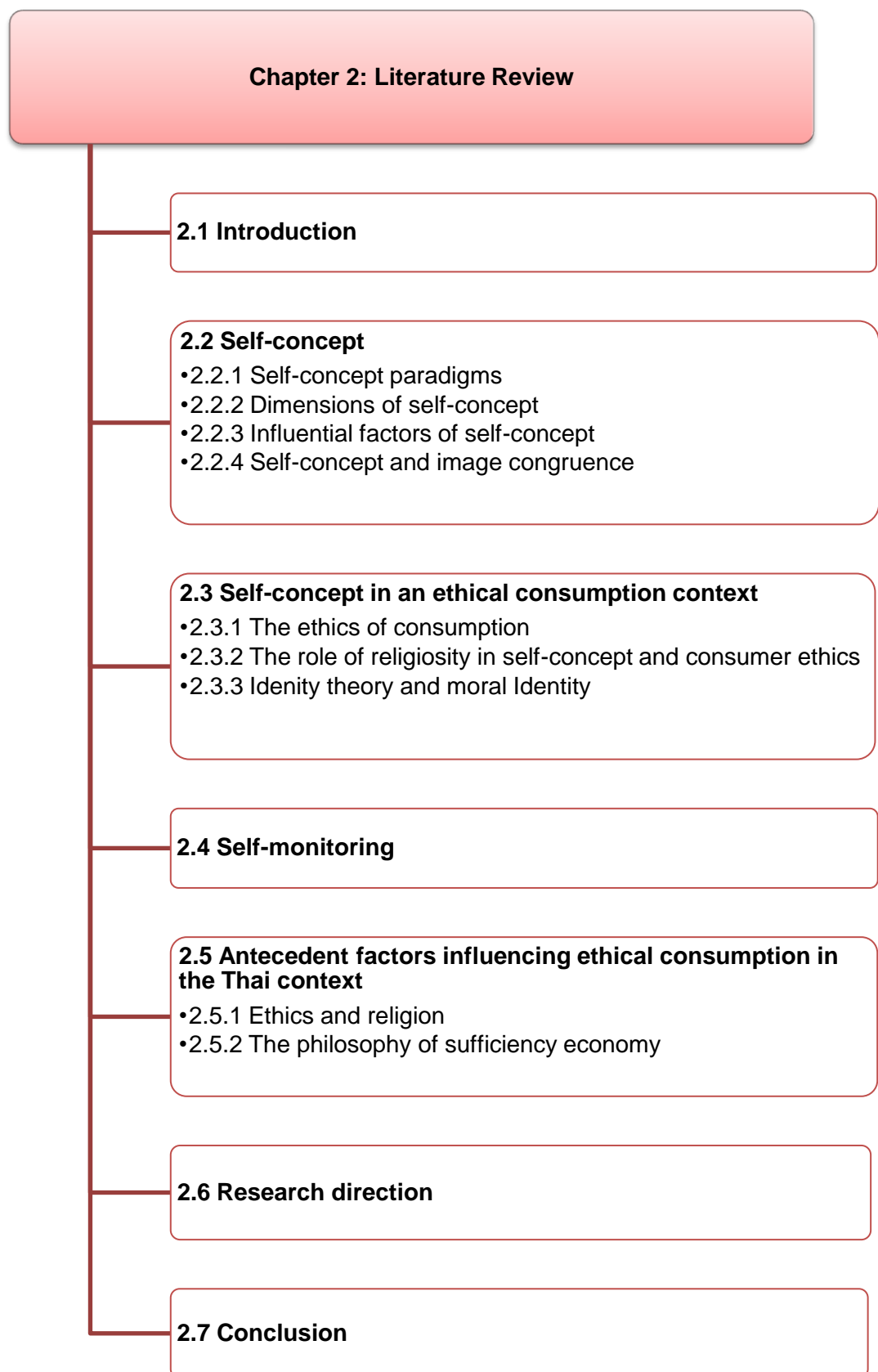
Then, section 2.2.4 introduces the fundamental combination of aspects of the self-concept and product image, namely the “self-image congruence model” (Grubb et al., 1967; Sirgy, 1982a), and explains how various empirical studies have applied this model to the marketing and consumer domain.

Section 2.3 particularly emphasises the self-concept in an ethical consumption context, including religiosity, moral philosophy, and consumer self-ethics. This is to bring the self to the focuses of ethics and consumer ethics and to explore how these issues and factors influence the self and ethical behaviour. Hence, section 2.3.1 gives an overview of ethical consumption, including consumer ethics. This highlights the extent to which consumers perceive products as ethical, and how they relate their ethical decisions. As religiosity is recognised to have an effect on ethical decision-making (e.g. Vitell and Paolillo, 2003), section 2.3.2 focuses on how and to what extent religiosity can impact the self-concept and consumer ethical behaviour. Section 2.3.3 highlights moral identity as a source of moral motivation, in relation to the self-concept and identity theory (e.g. Hardy, 2006). Moral identity can be viewed in this research as being located within the context of the self-concept and ethical consumption.

Section 2.4 addresses how the self-concept and ethical consumption patterns are interplayed by self-monitoring. It refers back to Synder's (1974, 1979) studies of self-monitoring and behaviour. Lastly, in the context of ethics and Thai consumers (section 2.5), the roles of religion, Buddhism, as the most influential religion (section 2.5.1) and sufficiency economy philosophy (section 2.5.2) are discussed. Gaps in the literature are identified in order to highlight the research direction in section 2.6. Different key points in the literature are

summarised in section 2.7. The overall structure of the literature review chapter is presented in Figure 2.1

Figure 2.1: A structure of literature review – Chapter 2



2.2 Self-concept

The self-concept is rooted in psychology, but has been treated from different points of view and disciplines; these include sociology (Kaplan, 1986), psychoanalysis (Freud, 1923, 1946; Erikson, 1968), philosophy (Sartre, 1957), and marketing-consumer research (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; Siry, 1982). From a sociological perspective, for instance, the self-concept is referred to in relation to social products and social forces (Kaplan, 1986). The philosophical domain regards the self-concept as “a completely self-defining subject [...] as we have a self, a determinate character, it is one that we have invented for ourselves, through our free choices” (Greetham, 2006, p. 221), i.e. through existentialism (Sartre, 1957). The viewpoint of psychoanalysis regarding the self-concept is influenced by Freud’s unconscious and conscious self (Freud, 1923), wherein the self is a system that is a source of stress and conflict (Erikson, 1968). Moreover, from a psychological approach, the self is seen by Hall and Lindsay (1957) as what one is aware of, one’s feelings, attitudes, perceptions, and as how one makes an evaluation of oneself as an object (Wylie, 1961; Grubb et al., 1967). Although the self-concept stems from various perspectives, its most often-mentioned definition is that posited by Rosenberg (1979, p. 7), who describes it as “the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings, having reference to himself as an object”.

However, it seems that the psychological idea of the self-concept is the one that is most relevant to marketing and consumer research (Reed, 2002), since consumer behaviour was initially examined using the social-cognition approach through self-congruity in a sex-role self-contextualisation (Vitz and Johnston, 1965). One of the most common reasons for marketing/consumer researchers’

adoption of the notion of self from psychology lies in the fact that marketing has attempted to understand what consumers think, feel and perceive when considering different alternatives, such as products, services and brands, in order to satisfy their needs and increase their preferences (Morgan, 1996; Kotler and Keller, 2006). In an earlier consumer study, Grubb and Grathwohl (1967) postulated that the self-concept relates to consumer behaviour in terms of the way in which an individual's self-concept, based on a psychological construct, links with the symbolic values of the product purchased in the marketplace. This approach to the self-concept evolves through an interaction process between an individual and others, as supported by the psychologist Roger (1959), and aims towards self-enhancement. Previous empirical consumer research by Abe et al. (1996) also highlighted the self-concept of a cognitive appraisal of an individual's attributes by claiming that it enables marketers to understand the way in which consumers make choices regarding the symbolic meanings attached to various products or brands (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987). Hence, self-concept derived from the psychology discipline is used for the current research project, in terms of its definition, paradigms, dimensions and other substantive self-related issues.

2.2.1 Self-concept paradigms

Different paradigms of the self-concept have been generated, creating a link between psychology and consumer studies. Each paradigm has its own distinction of where the self-concept resides, in terms of whether it is more internal or external in relation to an individual (Reed, 2002). Thus, the six paradigms of the self-concept are reviewed here to offer some insights into the underlying assumptions in each paradigm that relate to the self, which in turn

will facilitate the current research in identifying its paradigmatic direction (See *Appendix A for a summary of six paradigms of the self-concept*).

According to Reed (2002), the self-concept can be classified into six paradigms: introspection, behaviourism, psychoanalysis, cognition, phenomenology and symbolic interaction.

Introspective paradigm

Where the concept of the self is viewed as an object of introspection (paradigm 1), James (1890), one of the first psychologists, elaborated the self in terms of a philosophical distinction between “knower” and “known”. From James’ viewpoint, the self-concept is based on a broad, multifaceted assumption, which is defined as “differentiated aspects of the same entity (person); discrimination between pure experience (I), the contents of that experience (Me)” (Reed, 2002, p. 238) and “mine”. In relation to the different elements within one’s self, James (1890) referred to the “empirical self” (i.e. self is observable), which consists of four components: the spiritual self, the material self, the social self and the bodily self. The notion of self that is seen as “me” and “mine”, as well as the components of the empirical self, are uniquely defined for an individual:

“The empirical self of each of us is all that he is tempted to call by the name of *me*. But it is clear that between what a man calls *me* and what he simply calls *mine*, the line is difficult to draw. We feel and act about certain things that are ours very much as we feel and act about ourselves. Our fame, our children, the work of our hands, may be as dear to us as our bodies are, and arouse the same feelings and the same acts of reprisal if attacked. And our bodies themselves, are they simply ours, or are they *us*?” (James, 1890, p. 291).

“Clothing, so much a part of material self, enhances bodily self and satisfies social ends by gaining the attention of others. In this sense, the athletic shoes could also change the wearer’s social self, that is, the way

the wearer is evaluated and perceived by relevant others” (Reed, 2002, p. 239).

However, it seems that James’ (1890) distinction of the self between “me” and “mine” is intentionally obscure. This could be because the self-concept is claimed as an object of introspection that is considered from a very broad interpretation, implying that the self is the sum total of the way in which an individual thinks of him- or herself and what he or she can call his or hers, or, in short, the “global self” (James, 1980). Taking the self-concept based on the introspective paradigm into the consumer domain, product symbolism is one interesting issue that could obviously be integrated, as first carried out by Levy (1959) and Tucker (1957). According to self-concept theory, Gardner and Levy (1955) and Levy (1959) initially indicated that people act in such a way as to maintain and enhance their self-concept, within which one crucial aim is to access symbolic value from the products they purchase and use. Previous consumer literature has supported that consumer products go far beyond their utilitarian and functional value (e.g. Levy, 1959; Czikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Ericksen, 1996). Elliot (1997, p. 286), for example, illustrates that consumers do not “consume products for their material utilities but consume the symbolic meaning of those products as portrayed in their images”. This product symbolism closely parallels what James (1980) referred to as the notion of the material self.

To consider the link between the self and product meanings, early conceptual frameworks in consumer behaviour study, such as Grubb and Grathewohl (1967) and Grubb and Stern (1979), attempted in particular to link the self-concept to product meaning and product/brand image. This link further extends

Levy's (1959) emphasis on who we are as individuals and the products consumed, which is strongly related to social status.

Behavioural paradigm

Another paradigm of the self-concept is based on behaviourism (paradigm 2). Here, one's self is defined as "a repertoire of behaviours directed by a history of environmental contingencies [...] the sense of self is not an originating agent, it is a locus, a point at which many genetic and environmental conditions come together in a joint effect" (Reed, 2002, p. 240). Self-concept, in this case, is considered the agency of self: internal self is less significant than those external factors that impinge on behaviour. Thus, it can be claimed that this paradigm is in precise contrast to that which refers to the self as an object of introspection. In a consumer behaviour context, Reed (2002) highlighted that, in order to understand the behaviour of the different selves within an individual, the situational (external) contingencies of reinforcement need to be assessed. These contingencies might be, for example, receiving rewards from significant others or relevant reference groups, which can drive the consumer to purchase a particular product, and can act as behaviour-reinforcing stimuli (R-S) (Foxall, 1995; Martin and Pear, 1996).

However, because of the exclusion of the internal self in the behavioural perspective, some psychologist scholars have argued that the self study would be very limited, as the internal states and mental events – such as purpose, expectations, thoughts and sensations – are completely neglected (see, for example, Allport, 1955; Burt, 1962). For instance, Burt (1962, p. 229) states that "psychology, having first bargained away its soul and then gone out of its mind, seems now [...] to have lost all consciousness". This is in reference to the fact

that behaviourism accounts only for objectively observable behaviour and environmental conditions, whilst positioning itself more towards strictly scientific inquiry (e.g. Hull, 1951; Skinner, 1953, 1978, 1987). In terms of consumer research, the behavioural paradigm has been criticised for its deterministic assumption of human nature, although it allows consumer behaviour to be explored (Mowen, 1988; Anderson, 1983).

Psychoanalytic paradigm

In contrast to self-relevant environmental contingencies, the psychoanalytic approach (paradigm 3) treats the self-concept as the outcome of intrapsychic conflict and the output of the individual's unconscious forces – drives, instincts, needs and impulses (Freud, 1923, 1946). Although Freud's (1923, 1946) concepts of the "id" (unorganised instincts), "ego" (id's drives, the more realistic part) and "superego" (conscious, moralising manner) were not explicitly self-construct related, they have helped to focus interest on internal, irrational and unconscious impacts on human behaviour (Wylie, 1961). In short, Reed (2002, p. 241) explains, in reference to the self-concept based on psychoanalysis, that "the self has its origins in bodily experience and comes into contact with the external world as it evolves into a mental agency that mediates internal psychological forces and external reality constraints". Hence, in terms of comparing the psychoanalytic paradigm with others, it has more internal emphasis than the behavioural perspective, but is less externally focused than the introspective approach. Burns (1979) also noted that where impulses and drives arise in a person, the self-concept is the core of personality that controls those impulses and drives.

From this viewpoint, the empirical consumer study conducted by Hoch and Lowenstein (1991), for example, investigated how consumers control their desire for a product. This empirical study indicated that “self-control” represents a struggle between desire and willpower, wherein desire is reduced or overcome by willpower. It could be claimed that consumer studies that have adopted the psychoanalytic paradigm assume that purchasing behaviour is extremely complex and irrational (Reed, 2002). Therefore, previous consumer studies have attempted to examine particular consumption experiences using this paradigm, including impulse purchases and extreme luxury items (e.g. Phau and Lo, 2004; Franck and Lester, 2004; Rook, 1987). Therefore, it might be useful to adopt this paradigm if the irrational side of consumer behaviour is focused upon; however, this is beyond the scope of current study.

Social-cognition paradigm

From the social-cognition paradigm (paradigm 4) viewpoint, the self-concept is conceptualised through information processing and knowledge gained in memory, representing the totality of self-reference (Kihlstrom and Klein, 1994). This paradigm has been used extensively, and has gained much attention ever since early research into consumer behaviour. For instance, Bettman (1979) investigated consumer behaviour with respect to how information is processed, stored, retrieved and used when consumers make buying decisions. Sirgy (1982) even employed the social-cognitive perspective to develop his “self/image product/image congruity theory”. This theory is hypothesised to link self-image and product attributes, in which it relates to two important things: the strength between a particular image and a particular product that has been in memory, and the intensity of the consumer’s value of the self-image (Sirgy,

1982). Sirgy's (1982) work suggested that the strongest link between self-image and product image is achieved if a product is strongly associated with image X, wherein image X is highly valued by the individual, and is to serve as a desired component of one's self-concept. Other empirical consumer research has used the conceptual self from social-cognition to examine how activating self-reference knowledge in memory, via advertisements, impacts on consumer persuasion (Meyers-Levy and Peracchio, 1995; Burnkrant and Rao, 1995). Meyers-Levy and Peracchio (1995) found that when individuals were highly motivated in response to an advert, self-referencing leveraged persuasion.

Another relevant issue with respect to the self-concept within this paradigm is that of "self-schemas". Markus (1977) undertook a cognitive approach to introduce "self-schemas", which are "knowledge structures developed to understand, integrate or explain one's behaviour in a particular domain" (Markus et al., 1982, p. 38). With respect to self-schemas, self-concept can be formed that is highly important to cognitive process. Sedikides and Skowronski (1993) also highlighted that self-schemas are the beliefs or ideas that a person holds about him- or herself. These beliefs are in turn used to guide and organise information processing about the self. For example, an empirical consumer study by Hogg and Garrow (2003) extended self-schemas into the context of advertising consumption. It recognised the difference between genders when organising information processing with respect to advertising messages, which may imply that self-schemas affect how consumers process and interpret the messages in advertising.

Like the behavioural perspective, the social-cognitive paradigm is criticised for its deterministic assumption, as well as for being reductionist, because

consumers are assumed to be complex and rational decision-makers (Olshavsky and Granbois, 1979). O'Shaughnessy (1985) also argued that, taking into account the cognitive perspective, consumer behaviour is more reactive or passive, when consumers act as passive receivers of incoming information.

Symbolic interaction paradigm

Self-concept can be also studied from the symbolic interactionist perspective (paradigm 5), which emphasises "social identity". It was first suggested by Cooley (1902) that the self-concept is a product of social interaction; the self and society are interrelated, described as the "looking-glass self". The term refers to the fact that one's self-concept is influenced by what significant others think of him or her. The underlying assumption of this paradigm is that "human behaviour is guided more by private consistency or public displays, and consider[s] society and the self-concept as an important, single unit of analysis" (Reed, 2002, p. 245). It is also recognised that earlier consumer scholars attempted to treat the self-concept as a social entity (e.g. Solomon, 1983; Zaltman and Wallendorf, 1979; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981).

Moreover, in recent years there has been an increasing amount of literature in the consumer area claiming that self-concept in a consumption context should be considered as a social identity or in closer relation to the social self (Reed, 2002; Thoits and Virshup, 1995; Kleine et al., 1993; Hogg, 1996). These studies tend to consider one's self to be more multiple and fluid, by claiming that product consumption can be related to the self-image of the consumer in one situation, but not in another. This supports Schenk and Holman's (1980, p. 612) situational concept of self:

“It acknowledges that consumers have many self-concepts and that consumption of a brand may be highly congruent with the self-image in one situation and not at all congruent in another situation.”

Despite the fact that the symbolic interaction paradigm has added some social roles and meanings to the self-concept, it has been criticised for failing to incorporate a complete reality (Durkheim, 1964). The rationale behind this is that thoughts and acts, as social effects giving meaning to the self, could locate all legal and moral regulations, religious faiths, personal tastes, and other beliefs not in the individual, but rather in society itself (Rosenberg, 1989). From this critique, it could be claimed that, apart from those external impacts on individuals, other internal features are also dependent on the individual's construction of reality and the self (Rosenberg, 1989). This, in turn, raises an interesting point with regards to the individual's phenomenal world, thus facilitating the self-concept from a phenomenological viewpoint.

Phenomenological paradigm

With respect to the phenomenology school of thought (paradigm 6), the concept of self is claimed only to be inferred, and the self (in the real world) must be viewed through a person's perceptions (Reed, 2002). This is based on a fundamental argument that a real self can never be observed; Snygg and Combs (1949, p. 405) initially argued that:

“From the phenomenological point of view, his (the individual's) behaviour is always insightful; that is to say, it is always relevant to the situation as he interprets it at the moment.”

Reed (2002, p. 244) added that:

“The self-concept consists of aspects that are vital or are truly important to the person. The self-concept is embedded in the sense of self that includes all those perceptions the person holds about himself or herself.

In turn, the sense of self is embedded within the individual's total perceptual or phenomenological field."

Snygg and Combs (1949) also emphasised that the prediction of behaviour could be greatly improved by considering how people perceive, interpret and organise external reality. The rationale is that people normally do not behave in a way that corresponds with how things actually are, but rather in accordance with how things seem to them (Snygg and Combs, 1949). Later, Combs and Soper (1957) highlighted that what people take to be real for them are those experiences in which they live, representing the everyday situation of self. Wylie (1961) suggested that a key distinction of the phenomenological paradigm in relation to one's self is that behaviour is not only influenced by an individual's past and current experiences, but also by the personal meanings that the individual attaches to his or her perception of those lived experiences. As the self is unobservable from the phenomenological perspective, the external world is also significant for developing and maintaining one's self-concept (Burns, 1979).

In terms of position, based on this paradigm the self-concept would be placed in the middle of the continuum of an internal psychological aspect and an external social aspect (Reed, 2002). However, it is considered more internal as the perception of reality is focused away from the perception of the external world. By positing the phenomenology-self view into a consumer domain, symbolic consumption can be studied with reference to this paradigm. For example, Schouten (1991) examined the consumption of plastic surgery in relation to identity reconstruction. The study reported that individuals try to develop and maintain their self-concept through identity, which is reconstructed to be stable and harmonious in relation to the self-reality. However, it seems that the self-

concept in consumer research has not yet drawn explicitly from this paradigm, in which, to some extent, one's self should be viewed in terms of a person's real experiences and perceptions to better reflect social reality.

After reviewing the different paradigms of the self-concept, the current research sees that there is an opportunity to reflect a better reality of the self by exploring the self-concept based on the phenomenological perspective. This will also serve to fill the gap in the existing self and consumption literature, wherein little discussion has been conducted with respect to the phenomenological standpoint (Thompson et al., 1990, 1994; Cherrier, 2005). As one of the key research objectives is to focus on the role of the self in an ethical consumption context, so the concept of self is explored through both internal psychological factors – moral beliefs, religious faiths and other beliefs, and external drives – and social interactions that can shape an individual's perceptions and experiences. Therefore, self-concept in this study acknowledges both the psychological impulses as introspection, and the social relationships as symbolic interaction. Therefore, it can be claimed that by adopting the self-concept from the phenomenological paradigm, one's self can be recognised from both internal and external viewpoints, which can enhance the reflection of the self-reality.

The review on the self-concept paradigms provides a historical account of the self-concept. Once it is recognised where the self is posited in this study, dimensions of the self-concept also give an understanding of how the self can be classified from different constructs: single, dual, and multiple. Dimensions of the self allow this study to view its nature and how the self is layered.

2.2.2 Dimensions of the self-concept

Considering the dimensions of self can help to elucidate how this study treats the concept of self, as each self-dimension within a particular self-category has its own primary function to the way that the self is perceived. In general, the self-concept can be grouped for different approaches: single, dual, and multiple (Sirgy, 1982a), as shown in Table 2.2. Some early researchers considered the self-concept using a “single self” approach (Bellenger et al., 1976; Birdwell, 1968; Green et al., 1969; Grubb and Hupp, 1968; Grubb and Stern, 1971) by referring to actual self, real self, basic self, extant self, or, simply, self. Regardless of the different terms applied to the self in the single self approach, they are actually treated in the same way as the self-concept for describing the perception of one’s self (Sirgy, 1982a). Sirgy (1982b) also suggested an additional way in which to view the actual self-concept; that is, through “self-image value” as the degree of value attached to a particular actual self, and “self-image belief” as the degree of belief/perception strength associated with the image of oneself or self-image.

However, examining only a single element of self might generate an incomplete self-portrait for some studies, because of the complexity within self-perception. As a result, a “dual self” approach was adopted to explore the consumer self (Dolich, 1969; Belch 1978; Delozier and Tillman, 1972; and Sirgy, 1980), by focusing on more than one self-component, such as ideal or desired self, together with actual self. By referring to ideal self or desired self within the dual-self viewpoint, the self is defined as the image of what one would like oneself to be (Belch, 1978).

In addition to the single- and dual-self approaches, some previous studies have tried to add more layers to the self (Lee, 1990; Hogg and Michell, 1996). A “multiple self” approach is centred on the focus of the social self-concept, using terms such as presenting or social self – the image that one believes others hold – and ideal social self – the image that one would like others to hold (Maheshwari, 1974; Munson et al., 1980; Sirgy, 1980a). This multiple standpoint can be seen as a reflection of the way in which previous consumer studies responded to the social interactions in relation to self-concept (e.g. Hogg and Michell, 1996; Reed, 2002). By employing the multiple self-concept, Bracken (1992, p. 10) suggested a “multidimensional and context-dependent learned behavioural pattern that reflects an individual’s evaluation of past behaviour and experiences, influences an individual’s current behaviour, and predicts an individual’s future behaviour”. These three self-constructs are summarized in table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Summary of self-concept dimensions

Self-Concept Approach	Dimensions of Self-Concept	Definition of the Dimension	Previous studies in marketing
1. Single	Actual self, real self, basic self, extant self, simply self.	The perception of one's self: all the self terms in this approach are referred to as "actual self-concept".	Birdwell (1968); Bellenger et al. (1976); Heath and Scott (1998); Sirgy et al. (1997); Jamal and Goode (2001); Jamal and Al-Marri (2007).
2. Dual	Actual self. Ideal self, Desired self.	The perception of one's self. The self as the image of one's self that one would like to be.	Landon (1974); Hong and Zinkhan (1995); Ericksen (1996); Quester et al. (2000); Graeff (1996); Hosany and Martin (2012).
3. Multiple	Actual self. Ideal self. Social/presenting self. Ideal social self.	The perception of one's self. The self as the image of one's self that one would like to be. The self as the image that one believes others hold. The self as the image that one would like others to hold.	He and Mukherjee (2007); Hogg and Michell (1996).

2.2.3 Influential factors of the self-concept

As mentioned above, the concept of self can be influenced by the meanings attached to it. These meanings can help the individual to define themselves or even differentiate themselves from others (Richins, 1994). Therefore, it is crucial to look at the factors that give meanings to lives, which in turn are part of the extended self-concept. Possessions and significant others are both considered to have an impact on how an individual views him- or herself, and the literature which describes how material possessions and social network can contribute towards the extended self will be reviewed below.

Possessions

One of the key factors that can shape the self is claimed to be possessions (Belk, 1988; Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). The main proposition with respect to the possession-self relationship is that:

“We invest psychic energy in an object to which we have directed our efforts, time, and attention, this energy and its products are regarded as part of self because they have grown or emerged from self” (Belk, 1988, p. 143).

In short, an individual considers possessions as parts of themselves, which could mean that an individual's self can be seen through possessions and their inherent meanings. This could link back to the frequently mentioned idea that we are what we have/consume (Van Esterick, 1986; Rosenbaum, 1972). From this point of view, empirical studies on consumer behaviour have moved from possessions, to the relationship between self-concept and consumer brand choice or consumer behaviour (Kleine, et al., 1993; Richins, 1994a).

Taking a more specific stance on self-concept, Belk (1988) pointed out that possessions make a crucial contribution to, and are a reflection of, self-identity. The rationale for the relationship between possessions and self-identity is that the meanings which an individual attaches to products or brands through possessions are highly affected by his or her sense of self and identity (i.e. as part of the self). Thus, in the consumer behaviour literature, previous research has included consumer identity through possessions, and has supported their influence in consumer involvement (Celsi and Olson, 1988), consumer emotions (e.g. love) (Ahuvia, 2005), and consumer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998a). When considering possessions in a consumption context, meanings within particular possessions need to be focused on, as these particularly affect consumers' perceptions (Richins, 1994a, 1994b; Escals et al., 2005). Moreover, Richins (1994a) pointed out that consumers are concerned with the value of possessions, in which the meanings attached to possessions are crucial. The meanings within the possessions can derive from two sources: private meanings – ascribed by the consumers – and shared or public meanings – ascribed by members of society. This can imply that if the value of possessions is significant to an individual, possession through consumption could help to extend one's self whilst adding meaning to life (Belk, 1988).

On the contrary, Cohen (1989) argued that the possession concept provides consumer research to acknowledge the significance of such possessions to individuals, but would be adopted as an integrative concept unless the distinction between possession to the actual self and the extended self is explored or recognised. Therefore, although Belk's (1988) work on possession and extended self has gained significant support from various consumer studies (Ahuvia, 2005; Noble and Walker, 1997; Richins, 1994a, 1994b; Escals et al.,

2005), the current research recognises the significance of how possessions affect different selves – such as actual self and ideal self – in relation to the ethical consumption context (in section 2.3, discussions of the self-concept in relation to ethical consumption will be further elaborated).

Furthermore, it is stated that a person is changeable and unstable from a young age to adulthood and retirement, depending on their different life stages (Belk, 1988). This idea is supported by Montemayor and Eisen's (1977) work, which indicates that during the adolescence stage, self-definition is achieved through "doing things", whereas during pre-retirement adulthood, it is through "what one has" (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981) with respect to a sense of the past. Therefore, it can be seen that the age factor has an effect on an individual's purpose of possession in terms of being future-oriented (materials-focused, skills, goals, and self-definition) in adolescence or youth, and past-oriented in adulthood or mature age (memories, happiness, accomplishment, and a sense of immortality after death). Importantly, this indicates the extent to which individuals value their possessions differently depending on age. Thus, to explore self-concept in relation to possessions, a person's life goals may need to be considered alongside the meanings of possessions.

In addition, a recent study undertaken by Ferraro et al. (2010) extends Belk's (1988) concept of possession, which could help in clarifying how different degrees in terms of the value attributed to possessions influence one's self. The study proposed that the strength of the relationship between the self and possessions is highly significant in terms of indicating "how strongly the possession reflects domains on which a person bases his/her self-worth" (Ferraro et al., 2010, p. 1). In particular, the study explored the possession-self

link and the self-worth match – the extent to which a possession reflects a significant self-worth domain through the case of involuntary possession loss (Ferraro et al., 2010). Based on their empirical findings, Ferraro et al. (2010) argue that a consumer will not necessarily grieve for lost items, unless those possessions are linked to the self. This implies that the higher the degree to which a possession is able to represent the self and self-worth, the stronger the possession-self relationship. However, it is recognised that not many consumer researchers have taken into account “self-worth” when studying possessions. Hence, further study needs to consider “self-worth” as the association between possessions and one’s conceptual self, and to extend Belk’s (1988) viewpoint on possessions.

Significant others and social interaction

Although self can be shaped internally, society can also play a role. According to Maheshwari (1974), the self-concept involves social interactions, for instance an individual’s concern about the image that he or she would like others to hold – or the desired social self. It can be said that the relationship between the self and social variables is heightened from a sociological standpoint (Reed, 2002). In addition, referring back to Cooley (1902), the self-concept can be defined as “a reflexive mirror borne out of the interaction of the individual with his or her relevant social milieu” (Reed, 2002, p. 245). Thus, it can be claimed that, taking this social interaction into account within the context of consumption, a person can develop through the process of social experiences, including parents, peers, teachers, and additional significant others (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; Hogg, 1996; Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Grubb and Stern (1971, p. 382) even highlighted the role of significant others in

consumer-brand relations, by incorporating “product use as a symbol of consumers’ interaction with significant others”.

This idea is supported by Hogg and Michell’s (1996) empirical study, which emphasises the self-concept and consumer decision-making at the macro, broader level, including social roles and identities in relation to consumption choices in the context of mail-order catalogues. The study reveals that the social framework gives advantages to consumers in the sense that they can better understand themselves and others’ positions. With the recognition of the social context, consumer research becomes influential in viewing the social reality of individual consumers. The findings show confirmation of the meaning of consumption, which can be explained in terms of both functional (utilitarian) and symbolic (non-utilitarian) aspects, together with the positive and negative self from a social or significant-other viewpoint (Hogg and Michell, 1996). Critically, with respect to the self-social aspect, social influences, including those of significant others, can have an effect on self as both an input with respect to self and an interaction between self and consumption. However, limited studies have paid attention to the associations of the impact on significant others and the self. By incorporating significant others into the self, this in turn would be in line with the phenomenological approach that allows the study to explore the self from both internal and external values.

2.2.4 Self-concept and image congruence

By taking self-concept into account in a consumer and consumption context, the notion of self-congruity was introduced to make the connection between product and self, which “links the psychological construct of an individual’s self-concept with the symbolic value of goods purchased in the marketplace” (Grubb and

Grathwohl, 1967, p. 22). It implies that goods are taken in the form of “symbols”. Moreover, Grubb and Grathwohl (1967) even regards these symbols as social communications between the individual and other significant references, which accounts for the way in which self-image and product image converge into self-congruity. According to Warner (1959, p. 3), symbols are defined as “things which stand for or express something else, which should be thought of as unitary characters composed of signs and their meanings”. In this respect, the “self-image congruency model” (Grubb and Garthwohl, 1967; Sirgy, 1982a) is relevant. This allows consumer behaviour to be understood in terms of the potential relationships in symbolic consumption between product/brand meaning, consumers’ self-concepts and audiences – such as peers and significant others (Grubb and Garthwohl, 1967; Erickson and Sirgy, 1992; Kleine et al., 1993). The model also suggests that the self-concept can be improved through the use of a product or brand as an instrument to express oneself in public, with respect to social meanings towards the particular product attributes.

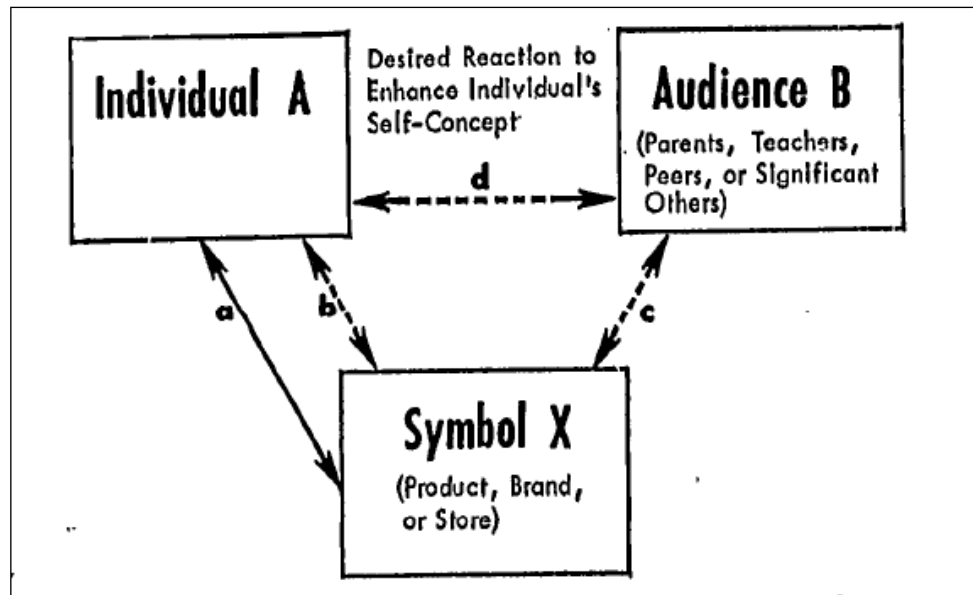
When a particular product/brand takes into account its symbol or symbolic consumption, it involves social-symbolism for shared meanings and self-symbolism for individual meanings (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). The shared meaning of a certain product, identified by a social group, is emphasised when it is an attempt to convey meaning through symbolic consumption (Veblen, 1953). This means that the symbolic social classification of a product allows consumers to relate themselves directly to it, associating their self-concept with the particular meaning of a product.

Furthermore, it can be claimed that self-image congruence fundamentally links to the notion of social psychology, by which Ross (1971, p. 38) proposes that “people go about purchasing one thing or another only if these things are consistent with, enhance, or in some other way fit well with the conception they have of themselves”. This can imply that consumers relate the concept of self to a product/brand, not only for self-consistency but also for self-enhancement, depending on circumstances. Regarding self-enhancement, a product and its consumption can enhance the self in two ways; the self-concept matches with publicly recognised goods, and recognised meaning supports the individual’s original self (Grubb et al., 1967) (as detailed in Figure 2.2). This implies that self-enhancement, in terms of goods as symbols, happens in the interaction process relating to internal and external reactions. Furthermore, there is some evidence to show that consumers define the self through symbols when their identity is not properly formed, as well as when they encounter new or unfamiliar roles. This leads to “the theory of symbolic self-completion” (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982), which indicates that individuals who face incomplete self-definition are more likely to complete their identity by utilising symbols associated with it.

Regarding the empirical studies in the consumer domain, the congruence between self-image and product-image has been recognised as an important determinant of consumer behaviour (Ericksen, 1996; Bellenger et al., 1976; Heath and Scott, 1998; Helgeson et al., 2004; Ibrahnm and Najjar, 2008; Sirgy, 1982a; Sirgy and Samli, 1985; Sirgy et al., 2000). Moreover, other marketing contexts have employed this self-image congruence in their studies, in areas such as purchase intention (Landor, 1974), product loyalty (Bellenger et al., 1976), product/brand preference (Ross, 1971; Hughes and Guerrero, 1971;

Sirgy, 1980), product evaluation (Quester et al., 2000; Hogg et al., 2000; Graeff, 1996), and brand personality (Parker, 2009). However, these studies have been mainly based on social-cognitive or behavioural perspectives.

Figure 2.2: Self-enhancement in the relationship between symbolic consumption and self-concept (Grubb et al., 1967)



One empirical study, for instance, regarding supported self-image congruence in the case of motor vehicles, indicated that consumers of a specific brand will have different perceptions about the self-concept characteristics they attribute to owners of a competing brand (Health and Scott, 1998). However, Health and Scott (1998) took notice that the self-concept and product image congruence may not suit investigation among products with similar physical characteristics and symbolic imagery. In addition, Hogg et al.'s (2000) study of an alcoholic soft drinks case, supported the self-image congruence hypothesis, which points out that self-image congruence is the main factor of influence when consumers choose a drink, although situational factors also play a crucial role in consumer decision-making. Critically, it is recognised that Hogg et al. (2000) heighten both

internal and external self-related factors by adopting self-image congruence and situational variables, such as social adjustment and physical environment.

Moreover, different types of self are applied along with self-congruity theory in marketing and consumer research: for example, Landon's (1974) study found a significant correlation between self-image (i.e. image of the self) and purchase intention, emphasising dominant self-image as an actualising tendency and ideal self-image as a perfection tendency. Quester et al. (2000) argue that actual self-image is relevant to the functional product, whilst status-related products are more closely linked with ideal self-image. Sometimes, a moderating variable, such as self-monitoring, is incorporated into the self-congruity theory in the study of consumer domains (Hogg et al., 2000; Graeff, 1996) and consumer ethics (Kavak et al., 2009). Therefore, it can be seen that self-congruity has long been present in marketing and consumer areas. The rationale for this could lie in the powerful explanation it offers, which depicts consumers in relation to both internal and external factors. This claim is supported by Grubb and Grathwohl (1967), who describe that in self-congruity theory, the symbol of a product/brand is integrated between consumers and significant others/audiences, and thus that consumer behaviour can be explained as a more interactive process.

In addition to the adoption of a self-concept in terms of symbols, some studies also try to incorporate personality into symbols, to view consumer buying behaviour based on a trait approach (Martineau, 1957; Woods, 1960). Martineau (1957) proposes that the product or brand image can be perceived as a symbol of the buyer's personality. It was hypothesised that people who consume in a particular manner will also show evidence of certain personality

characteristics in common with others. This, then, could result in facilitating the prediction of consumer behaviour. Empirical research from Evan (1959) and Kuehn (1963) can be seen as an attempt to investigate the personalities of consumers through the case of automobile brands. They reveal that consumer behaviour predictions can be based upon two key personality characteristics: dominance and affiliation. However, using the concept of self in consumer behaviour would be more applicable with respect to measuring how one perceives oneself. This is because the self-concept can further provide meaning of the association when an individual's behaviour relates to symbolic interaction.

2.3. Self-concept in an ethical consumption context

Although previous studies have recognised the relationship between an individual's personality variables or personal characteristics and ethical decision-making/behaviour (see, for instance, Vitell, 2003; Rallapalli et al., 1994), self-concept study in a consumer ethics context has only been carried out in a limited number of marketing and consume behaviour areas. Theoretically, the Hunt-Vitell ethical-decision-making model (1986, 1993) indicates the relevance of different background factors involving ethical judgement and the behaviour of individuals: cultural environment, profession, industry, organisational environment, and personal characteristics. However, only personal characteristics and cultural environment relate to consumer ethics (Vitell, 2003). One recent empirical study conducted by Kavak et al. (2009), for instance, investigated the effects of actual and ideal self-concept on dimensions of consumers' ethical attitudes. Kavak et al. (2009) draw attention to the fact that even though the self-concept as a personality characteristic did not generate statistically significant outcomes, its relationship to different

dimensions of consumer ethics was positive. De Pelsmacker et al. (2005, p. 366) also demonstrate that personal values have a strong effect on an individual's ethical consumption behaviour, and highlight that "values are abstract principles that reflect an individual's self-concept". In addition, this self-ethics relationship is supported by Rawwas et al. (2006, p. 72), who state that "individuals with a positive self-concept tend to develop an ethical sense and recognize the role of conscience in life."

With respect to other self-related issues in the context of ethical consumption, there has been some attempt to apply the self in order to examine consumer behaviour and decision-making (Shaw et al., 2000; Shaw and Shiu, 2002; Szmigin et al., 2009; Cherrier, 2007). Shaw and Shiu (2002) proposed a modified Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985, 1991) by adding the self-identity variable into this theoretical modification, in order to clarify ethical attitude and predicted behavioural intention. The study also emphasised that an individual's self-identity is central to behavioural intention, especially in the ethical consumer context: ethical consumption choices are made when ethical concerns become a part of consumers' self-identity (Shaw and Shiu, 2002). Later, Shaw et al. (2000) highlighted that not only is self-identity the focus of ethical intention and behaviour, but significant others also need to be considered.

Moreover, other studies have confirmed the contribution of self-identity to behavioural intention over other TPB variables (Sparks and Shepherd, 1992; Granberg and Holmberg, 1990). Nonetheless, self-identity, added to the modified TPB (Shaw and Shiu, 2002), has not yet been clarified and reflected precisely in the notion of the self-concept, as only the self-identity (as part of the

overall self-concept) has taken into account of their studies. The current study sees the need to explore the notion of self that considers all elements of the self.

Another empirical study that relates ethical behaviour to the self-related concept is that of Szmigin et al. (2009), who explained the dissonance of ethical consumers in relation to the inconsistency between the self-concept and behaviour. The study emphasised that self-concept could cause behavioural inconsistencies, such as when there are “flaws in their [individuals’] self-integrity” (Szmigin et al., 2009, p. 229). Individuals would then engage in a system of rationalisation and self-justification (Steele et al., 1993), wherein the self-concept is threatened and individuals feel uncomfortable with their decision if made at less than the optimal level (Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005).

As mentioned above, although the modified TPB seems to be a rational choice for studying ethical consumer behaviour and attitude, some studies link the self-concept to self-expression and social recognition, based on postmodernism toward ethical consumption practices (Cherrier, 2007; Firat, 1995). Cherrier’s (2007) work, for instance, indicated that without preconception and normative standards from society, consumers can still acquire, consume, and purchase ethical products/services, which in turn reflect who they are and who they want to be – thus supporting Belk’s (1988) study. Moreover, it can be noted that Cherrier’s (2007) study was fundamentally regarded as adopting a postmodern perspective. Regardless of its basic assumption of non-foundationalism, Cherrier (2007) strengthened the degree to which self-concept can affect ethical behaviour and considerations. Also, one important point made by Cherrier and

Murray (2007) is that ethical stands do not only involve getting to know oneself; societal influences need to be included as well.

In summary, even though self-concept and self-related issues have been mentioned and included in previous studies, little attention has been given to how consumers actually incorporate the concept of self and the self-image into their ethical consumption considerations. Also, consumer behaviour in the context of ethical consumption has not been explored through the self-image congruency model (Grubb and Garthwohl, 1967). By adopting this model, it helps to bring the self and ethical consumption together with an exchange of their meanings. According this model, the self-concept can be enhanced through consumption or product. This could link to the focus of thesis to explore how the self is shaped and developed in such consumption. Hence, the current research aims to fill these gaps in both consumer ethics and consumer behaviour literature.

As the self-concept is reviewed in the consumer ethics area, it is also interesting to further focus on other substantive issues that are related to ethical consumption context. In the following sections, the different substantive issues in the context of consumer ethics and ethical consumption are discussed, with a view to identifying the meaning of ethical consumption, the background of ethics and ethical consumer behaviour, and, importantly, how consumer ethics in the consumption context have been studied to date. To further review the ethical context, the role of religiosity toward ethical behaviour is focused on. In addition, moral identity is considered as one important element of ethical consumption, and one's self-concept.

2.3.1 The ethics of consumption

In the literature, the term “ethical consumption” tends to be broadly used to refer to consumption activity, including positive choice behaviours such as fair trade or environmentally friendly products (Wright, 2004; Golding and Peattie, 2005; Low and Davenport, 2005), concerns for animal welfare (McEachern et al., 2007), and avoidance or boycotting of particular goods or companies (Cherrier, 2007; Newholm and Shaw, 2007). Moreover, Holt (1995) and Schaefer and Crane (2001) argue that these ethical choices are potentially a part of the daily consumption activity that can be pictured within a broad consumption context. Barnett et al. (2005, p. 23), however, highlight that “commodity consumption has been problematised such that ethical consumption involves both a governing of consumption and a governing of the consuming self”. To put this into a positive perspective, Parkins and Craig (2006, p. 7) argue that “everyday life has a creative and ethical potential; and it must be reflexively negotiated and managed by contemporary subjects”.

Furthermore, as ethics is the main focus of ethical consumption (Muncy and Vitell, 1992), Taylor (1975, p. 1) defines ethics as the “inquiry into the nature and grounds of morality where the term morality is taken to mean moral judgement, standards, and rules of conduct”. To bring ethics into the consumer domain, Fullerton et al. (1996, p. 823) describe consumer ethics as the “rightness as opposed to the wrongness of certain actions on the part of the buyer or potential buyer in consumer situations”. Muncy and Vitell (1992, p. 298) also refer to consumer ethics as “the moral principles and standards that guide behaviour of individuals as they obtain, use, and dispose of goods and services”.

The rise of ethical consumption during the last quarter of the 20th century has attracted certain academic interest (see, for example, Strong, 1996; Harrison et al., 2005; Cherrier, 2005; Barnett et al., 2005). As a result, it has been recognised that there are various interlinked areas, to different extents, that have been developed to explain ethical consumption. Some researchers examine consumer ethics mostly in relation to shopping misbehaviour or ethically questionable behaviour; for instance, by adopting TPB (Fukukawa, 2002), incorporating a cross-cultural religiosity role (Vitell, 2003, 2005), and emphasising consumer rationales and justification (Eckhardt et al., 2010). Recent studies have extended ethical consumption to issues of voluntary simplicity (Cherrier, 2005, 2007; Shaw and Newholm, 2002; McDonald et al., 2006), as a means of harmonious and purposeful living, and an aim to work less, want less, spend less, and be happier in the process (Pearce, 2001). Some studies even consider the ethical consumer as the “conscious consumer”, who “consume[s] with sensitivity through selecting ethical alternatives” (Szmigin and Carrigan, 2005, p. 609) based on complex attitudes, inclinations, and lifestyle ambitions.

By taking into account conscious consumers, studies seem to emphasise a flexible approach to ethical consumption behaviour in order to cope with a more complex environment (e.g. Bell et al., 2002; Slater and Miler, 2007). Importantly, this flexible view is supported by Cherrier’s (2005) study, which recognises that ethical consumption behaviour is related to changes in the consumer environment, resulting in variations in individuals’ actions. Cherrier (2005) takes the notion of complexity of ethical concerns further, in order to explore the subjective meanings of ethical consumption behaviour based on an existential phenomenological standpoint. The study focuses only on the case of simplifying

ethical consumers – i.e. those who have reduced and simplified their consumption (Cherrier, 2005). In Cherrier's (2005) study, it was found that simplifying consumers reflect different meanings in life: a search for control, social integration, and authenticity. Yet, further consumer research in ethical consumption might need to explore the broader meanings of ethical consumption, which capture different ethical aspects of the self, alongside lived experiences.

Further to a cognitive perspective, Strong (1996) proposes the notion of a "rational consumer" by focusing on information-received as the critical core of ethical consumption. In Strong's (1996, p. 5) study, the rational consumer refers to "the well-informed consumer, who is not only demanding fairly traded products, but is challenging manufacturers and retailers to guarantee the ethical claims they are making about their products". The concept of the rational consumer later allows decision-making models to be suggested and studied, basically to the extent that consumers perceive needs, then engage in information gathering, which in turn affects their attitude and perception of the social context, while developing behaviour intentions (*Studying the ethical consumer - Editorial*, 2007). Vitell et al. (2001), for example, point out that the Hunt-Vitell model assumes that a rational consumer uses a deontological and/or teleological evaluation to address ethical problems.

In addition to the previous studies mentioned, empirical studies have adopted the psychological-cognitive construct to investigate consumer ethics and ethical consumer behaviour through consumption (e.g. De Pelsmacker et al., 2005; Aronson, 1992). Aronson (1992) argues that in order to understand dissonance in the ethical consumption context, self-consistency needs to be examined. It

was found that dissonance exists when there is an inconsistency between the self-concept and behaviour, being greatest “when it involves not just any two cognitions but rather a cognition about the self and a piece of our behaviour that violates that self-concept” (Aronson, 1992, p. 305). Also, some recent work has suggested that “moral self-realisation” is a crucial part of ethical issues when consumers make ethical decisions (Kozinets and Handlman, 1998). Moreover, Langeland (1998) indicated that green and ethical consumers, to some extent, gain an identity through their consumption. To support this, Barnett et al. (2005) emphasise that identity is one of the main focuses of consumers’ virtue, so that an understanding of ethical consumption does not just employ a rational, cognitive approach. Thus, from the trait (personality) school of thought, ethical consumption can help an individual to create a symbolic feeling of advantage that links to a particular lifestyle or expressive identity, and other social values (Moisander, 1991). In the case of eco-clothing, Niinimäki (2010) highlights that beside satisfaction of the actual need with respect to a certain product, constructing identity through product or brand symbols is also a matter of personal need. Therefore, whilst ethical consumers act ethically, they know that they behave morally correctly, which in turn allows them to closely approach an ideal ethical world (Giddens, 1991; Spaargaren and van Vliet, 2000; Oksanen, 2002).

From the literature on consumer ethics, it can be seen that previous studies have focused on different perspectives: philosophy and psychology. Two key theoretical approaches are found across the study of ethics and morality: normative and descriptive (Fukukawa, 2003; Lovett and Jordan, 2010). The distinctive point between these two approaches is that normative (or prescriptive) ethics is fundamentally linked to philosophy, whereas descriptive

ethics is related to the development of psychology (Fukukawa, 2003). The normative approach focuses on morality in terms of the rightness or wrongness of a person's behaviour by providing a code of conduct or set of rules as a behavioural guide (McGregor, 2005). However, although normative ethics has been predominantly adopted to explain consumer ethics, it has been criticised for its limitations for use in real life, where moral actions are more complex. For instance, Lovett and Jordan (2010) argued that people do not always encounter situations with explicit ethical codes of conduct, and they tend to use more subjective evaluations. Thus, it seems that normative ethics, to some extent, ignore the influence of emotional intuition on moral decision processes (e.g. Haidt, 2001; Walker, 2002). Another major criticism of the normative approach relates to the issue of everyday situations. Lovett and Jordan (2010) also indicated that where there is a formal code of ethics, it is somehow only limited to professional practice situations, and does not extend to individuals' everyday moral sensitivity.

With the emphasis of psychological influences and complex moral judgements, some light is shed on the descriptive approach. It can be said that "normative approaches are concerned with what individuals ought to do, while descriptive approaches are concerned with what individuals actually do when facing ethical situations" (Fukukawa, 2003, p.382). These ethical situations are claimed to be more closely related to the subjective aspects of socially situated individuals (McEachern and Cheetham, 2013). In addition, Fukukawa (2003) highlighted that descriptive ethics involve a cognitive and social learning approach (e.g. Ho et al., 1997). Based on the cognitive approach, Cognitive Moral Development (CMD) (see Kohlber, 1969), for example, was introduced to be widely used in the area of business ethics. To demonstrate descriptive ethics with social

learning, Caruana (2007b) suggested that morality is developed through “dialectical social processes between individuals and society” (McEacher and Cheetham, 2013, p.338), and that morality is seen to be fluid and subjective, based on the person’s decisions regarding right or good actions for society. Caruana’s (2007a) study even concluded that using descriptive approaches, rather than moral prescriptions, to investigate ethical consumption allows for a better understanding of moral implications towards consumption practices and processes.

In addition, when reviewing ethical decision models used in ethics research (via both normative and descriptive approaches), it was found that three main comprehensive models (i.e. synthesis of ethical decision, general theory, and person-situation interactionist) can be used to explain the ethical decision-making process of individuals, as set forth by Ferrell and Gresham (1985), Hunt and Vitell (1986, 1993), and Trevino (1986). It should be noted that Ferrell and Gresham’s synthesis of the ethical decision model combines both cognitive-affect variables and a social learning approach, in which there is room for internal and external constructs to be examined. Trevino’s person–situation interactionist model also draws upon a psychological construct with the idea that an individual’s “ethical dilemma” responds to cognition when the person decides on what is right or wrong. Trevino further adopted Kohlberg’s (1969; 1976) CMD in her model and pointed out that prescriptive knowledge is not actually helpful to explain and predict ethical behaviour. On the other hand, Hunt and Vitell’s (1986, 1993) general theory is linked to normative ethics, as the theory relies on two normative approaches: deontology and teleology. However, in the area of consumer ethics, Kavak et al. (2009) indicated that only the Hunt–Vitell model can be applied to the ethical behaviour of consumers, as

the model includes the individual's moral philosophy, personal characteristics, and cultural environmental variables. The Hunt–Vitell model might be able to explain ethical behaviour using explicit rules or codes of conduct and consequences of that behaviour. However, there seems to be an opportunity to explore the ethical behaviour of consumers by not limiting the present study to a set of prescriptive rules in a specific ethical context.

It is clear that a large number of empirical studies have adopted these ethical theories (from both normative and descriptive approaches) by emphasising mostly from the seller or corporate side (see, for example, Singhapakdi et al., 2000a; Magill, 1992; Forsyth, 1992; Hunt et al., 1989). Hence, under-examined studies on consumer ethics could represent a significant gap in the current literature, which needs further research to generate a more complete picture of the research in ethics. Within this literature, there is a call for a more descriptive, flexible investigation towards consumer ethics that allows, as in this thesis, the self and ethical consumption to be fluid and context-dependent. More research in ethics needs to focus on proposing a theoretical framework of consumer ethics, which relates the self-concept to ethical consumption and explains the meanings associated with the self-ethical consumption relationship.

2.3.2 The role of religiosity in the self-concept and consumer ethics

Religiosity is viewed as a deity's laws, which are "absolutes that shape the whole of one's life. Faith rather than reason, intuition, or secular knowledge, provides the foundation for a moral life built on religion" (Vitell and Paolillo, 2003, p. 152). However, it should be noted that religiosity differs from spirituality in its orientation. Emmons (1999, p. 877) points out that spirituality involves "a search for meaning, unity, connectedness to nature, humanity and the

transcendent”; conversely, religiosity provides a “faith community with teaching and narratives that [...] encourage morality”. McDaniel and Burnett (1990) also define religiosity as “a belief in God accompanied by a commitment to follow principles believed to be set by God” (Vitell et al., 2005, p. 175). In contrast, Vitell et al. (2009, p. 602) regard religiosity more from a trait school of thought, as “the degree to which an individual is a religious person apart from his/her particular religious beliefs and the way that those beliefs are manifested”. However, regardless of how religiosity is defined from different perspectives, it relates to a morality that can guide ethical decision-making and behaviour. Recent studies have emphasised the relationship between religion and morality. For example, Geyer and Baumeister (2005, p. 413) indicate that “religion has strong ties to morality in that religions prescribe morality [...] Further, many religious persons believe that religion is the source of morality”.

In reviewing other issues relevant to religiosity, Allport (1950) suggests that religious motivation fundamentally consists of intrinsic religiousness and extrinsic religiousness. The distinction between these two religious motivations is that “the extrinsically motivated person uses his religion whereas the intrinsically motivated lives his religion” (Allport and Ross, 1967, p. 434). Donahue’s (1985) later study showed that intrinsic religiousness is more highly correlated to ethical beliefs compared to extrinsic religiousness. The rationale of Donahue’s (1985) empirical result is that the extrinsic construct does not actually relate to religiousness per se; rather, it is one’s attitude toward religion that can be regarded as a source of comfort and social support. Moreover, Vitell (2009) explains that, in relation to religiosity, the extrinsic dimension relates more to utilitarian motivations that underlie religious behaviour, whereas the

intrinsic dimension relates to motivations that are more inherent to the goal of a certain religion.

Previous researchers have supported the importance of religiosity with respect to ethical behaviour and judgement (Vitell, 2009; Clark and Dawson, 1996; McNichols and Zimmerer, 1985; Shepard and Hartenian, 1990; Signhapakdi et al., 2000a; Kurpis et al., 2008; Walker et al., 2012). Clark and Dawson (1996) explained that religiosity is a potential source of ethical norms, and influences ethical evaluation, which means that it is considered a motivation for ethical action. In the context of consumer ethics, Vitell et al.'s (2001) empirical study found that consumer alienation, together with religiosity/spirituality, could provoke and relate to ethical judgement. Later, Vitell and Paolillo (2003) highlight religiosity further and emphasise its role as a key to consumer values and moral beliefs.

Furthermore, it is theoretically rational for religiosity to become a central issue in consumer ethics. According to the Hunt-Vitell model (1986, 1993), religiosity/spirituality is included in the model as one of the key personal characteristics, in which it is claimed that religiosity influences the ethical beliefs of a consumer in a positive way. The Hunt-Vitell model is also supported by Giorgi and Marsh's (1990) empirical study which revealed that there is a positive effect in terms of an individual's ethics between religion and level of religious fervour. By taking a closer focus on the relationship between religiosity and ethical outcomes, Weaver and Agle (2002) argue that religious persons should not be expected to behave ethically, unless they engage in religious motivation. Weaver and Agle (2002) further indicate "religious motivation orientation" (RMO) (Rokeach, 1960) as a key influence on religiosity and ethical

behaviour. Other empirical studies also employ RMO to measure religiosity (see, for instance, Meadow and Kahoe, 1984; King and Crowther, 2004). However, RMO seems to be incorporated into extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions of religiosity (see, for example, King and Crowther, 2004; Walker et al., 2012).

Within the context of the self-concept, previous studies have linked religiosity with moral identity (see, for example, Weaver and Agle, 2002; Vitell et al., 2009; Walker and Pitts, 1998). In Weaver and Agle's (2002) study, emphasis is also given to the role of religious self-identity in ethical behaviour based on social construction, through the symbolic interactionism approach. Within symbolic interactionism, one's self-concept can be referred to as self-identity, by reference to which Weaver and Agle (2002) have claimed its relationship with religiosity and ethical outcomes. Thus, it is explained to the extent that as religiosity can influence both human behaviour and attitude, so too can certain behaviour be influenced by religious self-identity, which is formed by the internalisation of role expectation supported by religion.

A more recent empirical study from Vitell et al. (2009) focuses on moral motivation in relation to religiosity and moral identity. It was found that moral identity is treated as a source of moral motivation by research respondents, whilst religiosity is a significant antecedent of moral identity. In the study, Vitell et al. (2009) also employ self-control as a mediator in their framework, suggesting that individuals who exhibit high amounts of extrinsic religiosity are drawn more strongly towards symbolisation of moral identity, from which low self-control is gained. In contrast, intrinsic religiosity has a direct positive effect on both the internalisation and symbolisation dimensions of moral identity, achieving high levels of self-control. This result is consistent with the Hunt-Vitell

Theory of Ethics (1986, 1993), in which (overall) religiosity is more likely to precede moral decision-making. Therefore, although some previous studies have revealed that extrinsic religiosity has a weak/negative relationship to ethical or moral action (Donahue, 1985; Smith et al., 2003), both extrinsic and intrinsic religiosity are still meaningful variables, to be considered in order to gain a more complete insight into religiosity and ethical consumer behaviour. However, it must be noted that in order to measure or explore religiosity, viewing religious preference and church attendance alone is insufficient to explain an individual's religious beliefs toward ethical actions (Kidwell et al., 1986). A person's religiosity needs to be explored through both extrinsic – religious values and church attendance (Wikes et al., 1986) – and intrinsic – practising one's religion (Conroy and Emerson, 2004) and religious orientation (Salsman et al., 2005; Vitell, 2009) – dimensions.

Overall, in spite of a certain amount of consumer research on religiosity and ethical outcomes, it remains elusive (Weaver and Agle, 2002; Longenecker et al., 2004; Parboteeah et al., 2008). Inconsistent results have been obtained from previous studies regarding the positive and negative relationship between religiosity and ethics; Hood et al. (1996, p.371) even describe this relationship as “something of a roller coaster ride.” However, one approach to help clarify this relationship might be to look deeper at the meanings inherent in one's religion, which is associated with one's conceptual self, and the extent to which it can reflect an account of ethical consumption. This might be time to give light to lived meaning-seeking research.

To elaborate further on the moral identity role in ethical consumption and one's self-concept, the following section discusses the extent to which moral identity

has been defined. Previous studies on moral identity are reviewed to pinpoint the gap in the literature, and opportunities for the current research.

2.3.3 Identity theory and moral identity

To define moral identity, we firstly need to clarify the self and identity. Josselson (1994, p.82) highlighted that identity is “an expression of self, for, with, against, or despite; but certainly in response to others.” It implies that one’s self and identity are related to the extent that “one’s individual identity is a set of meanings applied to the self within a social role or situation that determines what it means to be who one is” (Burke and Tully, 1977, p.883). In this respect, identity is part of the self, or it is a self-element. The set of meanings is sometimes complex and defines the identity that in turn serves as a standard or reference when the individual evaluates oneself and one’s behaviour (Burke, 1991). Moreover, Brewer and Gardner (1996) described that identity orientation can be seen at different levels: personal (internal), relational (dyadic), and collective (group) level. Particularly, at the personal level, identity is central, persistent, and distinctive attributes of one’s self (Berger et al., 2006). Some studies have divided the concept of identity into social identity theory (Turner et al., 1987; Hogg and Abrams, 1988; Simon et al., 1998) and (personal) identity theory (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Stryker and Burke, 2000). In social identity theory, individuals attempt to find uniformity and sameness with their community whereas in personal identity theory individuals look for uniqueness to stand out from the community (Harré, 1983; Ricouer, 1994). Through social identity or personal identity, however, they enable an identity to be formed.

With no intention to separate the two identity theories, Stets and Burke (2000) later combine both social identity and personal identity in their study to gain a

more fully integrated aspect of the self. Nonetheless, ignoring one's identity could cause failure to acknowledge the deeply personal importance of one's self-concept (Lyubomirsky et al., 2006; Schiraldi, 2001) that is crucial for assessing moral entity. Also, limited attention among empirical studies has given to personal identity, advancing one's self-concept in the ethical context (Burke and Stets, 2009). This leads the current research to explore one's self in ethical consuming situations, focusing on personal identity, yet leaving room for social identity, so that it can capture internal and external views of self.

In an ethical context, it comes to a concern of morality to the self when individuals make ethical decisions. This concept can be seen from Damon and Hart's (1992, p.455) emphasis that:

“There are both theoretical and empirical reasons to believe that the centrality of morality to self may be the single most powerful determiner of concordance between moral judgment and conduct [...] People whose self-concept is organized around their moral beliefs are highly likely to translate those beliefs into action consistently throughout their lives.”

By taking into account of self-concept, identity and morality, moral identity is viewed as a fundamental element of who we are and answers the three key questions: “what is the right thing to do?, how is the best possible state of affairs achieved?, and what qualities make for a good person?” (Hart, 2005, p.166-168). Recent consumer ethics studies have adopted identity theory in relation to the self, for instances, to examine the moral self (Stets and Carter, 2011) and self-awareness (based on social perceptions of one's self) and self-deception (Caldwell, 2009). Yet, they have not precisely reflected on the notion of self that highlights internal (personal) and external (social) moral identity.

Moral identity can be defined as one's self-concept relating to a set of moral traits, such as honesty, compassion, fairness, and generosity (Aquino and Reed, 2002; Reed, 2002). However, it should be noted that moral identity is not restricted to meanings of being a good or moral person; rather, it refers to all possible meanings that fit within a wide range of being a good and bad person (Stets and Carter, 2011). Some earlier studies limited their focus on specific aspects of the moral identity: justice and care (Stets and Carter, 2006; Stets et al., 2008), and one study, for example, used community to be the only case (Walzer, 1983). Although there is yet no agreement of the full set of meanings that morality should hold, studies need to be more flexible to possible views of each individual's morality.

Taking into account all of the possible meanings of morality and the wide range of moral identity, it is closely linked to a descriptive approach to morality (e.g. Ho et al., 1997; Carusna, 2007b). Referring to morality as a fluid concept is supported by Haidt and Joseph's (2004) study, in that humans develop distinct cognitive systems that process various kinds of moral issues. In addition, as identity, itself, is part of expressing one's internal state onto society (i.e. personal identity and social identity), it fundamentally relates to socio-psychological elements that help an individual to develop their self-identity. In particular, moral identity based on a descriptive approach even facilitates the notion of moralisation within one's self to be explored from both personal (or internal) elements and social conditioning (see Ho et al., 1997).

Moral identity has emerged in consumer ethics research due to the fact that moral reasoning has been a controversial and much-disputed subject within the field of moral motivation and ethical behaviour (Kohlberg, 1981; Glover, 1997;

Duriez and Soenens, 2006). Moral reasoning has been treated among studies in ethics as the rational source of moral motivation (Turiel, 2002) that refers to the approach to processing information using conscious mental activity in order to make ethical judgements (Jones, 1991; Kohlberg, 1969). However, recent empirical studies argue that the rational approach of moral motivation based on moral reasoning alone is ineffective with respect to fully explaining moral behaviours, unless moral identity is considered (Aquino and Reed, 2002). The reason for this is that moral identity reflects the “extent to which the elements most central to a person’s identity (e.g. values, goals, and virtues) are moral. Therefore, when moral virtue is important to one’s identity, this yields “motivation to behave in line with one’s sense of morality” (Hardy, 2006, p. 215). Moreover, based on the moral identity perspective, moral- and self-systems are seen as being integrated, as they both play a crucial role in regulating moral behaviour (Hardy and Carlo, 2005; Lapsley and Narvaez, 2004).

Regarding the moral identity theory, it is suggested that individuals create their identity by making moral commitments, which are central to their self-definition and self-consistency (Bergman, 2004). The critical premise of the moral identity model is that individuals may differ in how essential morality is to their self-identity, even though they have the same moral beliefs (Vitell et al., 2009). To further highlight the moral identity model, Aquino and Reed (2002) point out that with regard to the traits approach, individuals construct a moral self-definition, around which their personal identities are systematised. From the moral identity model (Bergman, 2004), it can be seen that moral identity relates, to some extent, to self-schema, which can in turn link to an individual’s self-concept. Also, previous studies suggest that the moral self or moral identity can be

facilitated by various non-conscious (religiosity) and conscious (self-control) factors (Weaver and Agle, 2002).

This then implies that the moral self is somehow influenced by self-control, or the way in which an individual controls or monitors his/her behaviour concerning moral issues. The extent to which one monitors their behaviour is discussed below, so as to highlight its associations, and the interaction between the self and potential decisions to consume products more ethically.

2.4 Self-monitoring

Self-monitoring can be seen to affect how an individual tends to behave, as it is stated that “individuals differ in the extent to which they can and do observe and control their expressive behaviour and self-presentation” (Synder and Gangestad, 1986, p. 125). It also relates to the social context, such as when one controls the self or notices situational cues aimed at socially appropriate behaviour (Synder, 1974). Synder (1974) also claimed that self-monitoring occurs within one’s self, internally and externally, with respect to cues for proper behaviour, and thus for ethical behaviour.

By considering the behavioural control factor of consumer behaviour in an ethical context, previous studies have focused on self-control (see, for example, Vitell et al., 2009) and self-monitoring (Kavak et al., 2009). The distinction between self-control and self-monitoring is that self-monitoring is a broader concept than self-control, as it captures both self-observation and self-control of individuals. Vitell et al. (2009), in an attempt to investigate the role of self-control in the relationship between religiosity and moral identity in terms of refraining from morally questionable behaviour, found that self-control plays a mediating

role in this relationship. However, the consumer study conducted by Glover et al. (1997) showed no moderating influence on consumer ethics. Although self-monitoring revealed no moderating effect between the moral developmental level of consumers and their ethics, it is still considered an important determinant of consumer ethics. This argument is also supported by Rallapalli et al. (1994), who indicated that consumers with strong drives to follow socially desirable behaviours are likely to be more ethical. However, there is a call for further exploration of self-monitoring, and in particular to focus on the influence of moderating variables in ethical decision-making (O'Fallon and Butterfield, 2005).

In a general consumption context, an empirical study from Hogg et al. (2000), for example, includes self-monitoring in the proposed conceptual model, by suggesting that low and high self-monitoring moderates the influence of value expression and social adjustment on product choice. Its findings support Synder's (1979, pp. 110-111) work, suggesting that low self-monitors rely on dispositional information, questioning "who am I and how can I be me in this situation?". On the other hand, high self-monitors rely on situational information, questioning "who does this situation want me to be and how can I be that person?" Thus, it can be implied that high self-monitors are more sensitive to the self-expression of others and social situations, whereas low self-monitors tend not to be concerned with social appropriateness.

Furthermore, Leone (2006) suggests that there are five conceptual dimensions of constructing self-monitoring: concern with the social appropriateness of self-presentation, attention to social comparison information, control of self-presentation and expressive behaviour, strategic displays of self-presentation

and, in effect, state and situational self-presentation and expressive behaviour. Taking self-monitoring into account in an ethical consumption context, Kavak et al. (2009) found that high self-monitoring consumers tend to have strong ethics, supporting Synder's (1979) proposition on self-monitoring. Nonetheless, even though the importance of self-monitoring as the moderating variable within the consumption context has been shown in previous studies (Synder, 1979; Hogg et al., 2000; DeBono, 2006; Kavak et al., 2009), far too little attention has been paid to how self-monitoring affects different dimensions of self. Thus, it is clear that self-monitoring has an impact on the self-concept and individuals involved in different selves, so it needs to be further studied in detail, particularly in the ethical consumption context.

2.5 Influential factors of ethical consumption in the Thai context

As the current research seeks to further explore the self-concept in relation to ethical consumption among Thai consumers, relevant factors that could have some impact on ethical beliefs and decisions are reviewed, particularly in the Thai context. In Thailand religion plays a significant role in shaping individuals' morality and guiding ethical behaviour. In line with religious influence, the philosophy of sufficiency economy has also taken its root in Thai society, affecting not only the nation development, but also the daily life and personal values. Hence, religion, particularly Buddhism, and the sufficiency economy philosophy are discussed.

2.5.1 Ethics and Religion

Thailand has been placed among the most religious nations, where people give high importance to religion (see in Figure 1.2). In particular, almost 95% of

Thailand population is Buddhist, followed by Muslim, Christian, and others with 4.6%, 0.7%, and 0.1% respectively (Central Intelligence Agency-CIA, 2000). As Buddhism is dominated in Thai culture, ethical belief and attitude of Thai people are more likely to be based on Buddhist doctrine (Keown, 1996). Keown (1996, p.9) indicated that Buddhism is considered as one of the world's most ethical religions, in which ethics is the key point affecting Thai people's lives:

“At the heart of Buddhist ethics is the principle of non-harming (*ahimsā*), which manifests itself in the respect for life for which Buddhism is renowned. Buddhists have scrupulous respect for all living creatures, whether human or animal, and regard the intentional destruction of life as a grave wrong. This philosophy has led many (though by no means all) Buddhists to become vegetarians and to adopt pacifism as a way of life.”

Although Buddhism is respected to be an official religion in Thailand, Wongtada et al. (1998) pointed out that to some extent the nature of Buddhism is flexible in its practices due to the concept of co-existence, tolerance and individual initiative. Therefore, other religions are freely practiced in Thai culture, for example, there are a number of Muslim communities in the southern region of Thailand. Regardless of each particular religion, religion has influenced ethical decisions among Thai people (Singhapakdi et al., 2000a; Signhapakdi et al., 2000b). Thus, by focusing on the term “religiosity”, rather than a specific religion, it still enables the current research to explore the impact of religion on Thai ethical consumers through ethical consumption. Nevertheless, some Buddhist beliefs reside in Thai society, using as a mean of social development.

2.5.2 The philosophy of sufficiency economy

As guidance for the country's sustainable development, the philosophy of sufficiency economy was firstly introduced into Thai society since 1974, by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand (UNCTAD, 2000; Suwanraks,

2000). Initially, His Majesty pointed out the need for Thai government to manage the country step-by-step, aiming at a more balanced development. According to His royal speech (1974, p.2), the philosophy of sufficiency economy is suggested that:

“Economic development must be done step by step. It should begin with the strengthening of our economic foundation, by assuring that the majority of our population has enough to live on. ...Once reasonable progress has been achieved, we should then embark on the next steps, by pursuing more advanced levels of economic development. Here, if one focuses only on rapid economic expansion without making sure that such plan is appropriate for our people and the condition of our country, it will inevitably result in various imbalances and eventually end up as failure or crisis as found in other countries.”

This philosophy was later more emphasised through the government practices and ways of living after Thailand encountered the economic crisis in 1997. Since then, His Majesty has reiterated and continuously expanded the concept of sufficiency economy in an attempt to leverage the Thai economy to be more resilient, balanced, and sustainable while handling with the challenges from globalisation (Sathirathai and Piboolsravut, 2004; Piboolsravut, 2004). From the National Economic and Social Development Board’s (2004, p.5) viewpoint, sufficiency economy is defined as:

“Sufficiency Economy is a philosophy that stresses the middle path as the overriding principle for appropriate conduct by the populace at all levels. This applies to conduct at the level of the individual, families, corporations, and communities, as well as to the choice of a balanced development strategy for the nation so as to modernize in line with the forces of globalization while shielding against inevitably shocks and excesses that arise. Sufficiency means moderation and due consideration in all modes of conduct, as well as the need for sufficient protection from internal and external shocks. To achieve this, the application of knowledge with prudence is essential. In particular, great care is needed in the utilization of untested theories and methodologies for planning and implementation. At the same time, it is essential to strengthen the moral fibre of the nation, so that everyone, particularly

political and public officials, technocrats, business and financiers, adheres first and foremost to the principle of honesty and integrity. In addition, a balanced approach combining patience, perseverance, diligence, wisdom and prudence is indispensable to cope appropriately with critical challenges arising from extensive and rapid socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural changes occurring as a result of globalization.”

From this definition, it can be seen that the philosophy of sufficiency economy is related to morality and Buddhism. Eaewsriwong (2000) highlighted that sufficiency economy can be treated as a culture and moral standard, in which it focuses on non-greed and sharing among people, nature, and environment. Eaewsriwong (2000) further explained that sufficiency economy aims at having sufficient basis needs while being sustainable in ecological system and lifestyles. This then links to the concept of “middle-path” that is critical for pursuing a balanced development of the nation and serving people a sustainable way of living (Sathirathai and Piboolsravut, 2004).

Kantabutra (2006) also identified three main components of sufficiency economy: moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity – the ability to handle internal and external changes. With respect to moderation, it is underlined by Buddhist principles, referring to “the middle way between want and extravagance and between over-consumption and under-consumption” (Pruetipibultham, 2010, p.101). Moreover, the philosophy of sufficiency economy is engaged in everyday’s life and ethical and rational behaviour. Phra Dhammapitaka (2000), for example, illustrated that sufficiency economy could be in line with “Threefold Training”: morality, mental concentration, and wisdom, based on Buddhist principles, that is significant for personal development in Thai society.

In addition, the sufficiency economy philosophy has long firmly grounded in Thai society. This might be because Thailand has been governed and nurtured by His Majesty, who is at the central soul of the country (Piboolsravut, 2004). Thai people have given love and respect to His Majesty while trying to do something good in return. Also, it proves that Thailand's economy has been revitalising from the economic downturn and imbalanced development. Ultimately, it could enhance morality, ethical behaviour, and well-being of Thai people as a whole.

2.6 Research direction

Although advanced studies on the self-concept and consumption have been conducted, with the aim of producing generalisable research (see, for example, Heath and Scott, 1998; Graeff, 1996; Jarmel and Al-Marri, 2007), further work is needed to obtain a deeper account of lived meanings in the self and consumer context. In particular, meanings of lived experiences in an ethical consumption context through the self-concept have been ignored, resulting in a number of research opportunities. By considering these opportunities, the current research project aims to gain an understanding of the self-concept and ethical consumption by exploring the role of the self in different ethical contexts (i.e. taking a more flexible approach), where religiosity has an important influence on consumers' morals and ethics. The rationale for this is that the self and consumption appear to be interrelated, as supported by the statement that "we are what we have" (Belk, 1988), and in some cases it has been claimed that "we are what we reject" (i.e. the case of consumer resistance) (Fournier, 1998b, p.89; Hogg and Savolainen, 1998). These "approach" and "avoidance" behaviours could be relevant to the ethical context in this thesis. In order to explore the meanings of ethical consumption, the self-concept needs to take

into account as the self and the consumption can share their meanings. Levy (1959) proposed the idea that consumers purchase products for the symbolic values. So the self needs to be studied when concerning ethical consumption, as it can reflect the notion of “who they are” of the consumers. As mentioned with regards to the identified gaps, the current research project therefore focuses on the role one’s self-concept plays in ethical consumption, wherein Thai consumers are chosen as the subjects of study in terms of: self-beliefs, self-perception, self-monitoring, moral beliefs, and ethical consumption patterns.

In addition, because of the crucial role of religiosity in relation to consumer ethics and ethical behaviour (Allport and Ross, 1967; Vitell et al., 2001), Thailand is selected as the source of data due to the high intensity of religiosity in the country (see in Figure 1.2). As explained above, Thailand is considered a strong religious country, wherein Buddhism represents the core source of moral beliefs among Thai people (Singhapakdi et al., 2000b; Wongtada et al. (1998). According to Wongtada et al. (1998), Buddhism, by its nature, is stricter than other religions, and emphasizes the co-existence of man and nature to promote a peaceful mind and kindness, as well as the concept of moderation: consume moderately, live moderately, and relate moderately (Singhapakdi et al., 2000b). However, there a number of people, who are Christian in Thailand; and religion has strongly affected their lives. Although religiosity has an impact on moral and ethical behaviour in a consumer context (e.g. Vitell and Paolillo 2003; Vitell et al., 2009; Clark and Dawson, 1996), this does not mean that religiosity is the only source of morality in this research – rather, it is one source of morality, albeit an important one.

To gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences regarding ethical consumption, the subjects studied in this research are not separated from *being* in the real world. This leads to the rationale for choosing phenomenology as the current research paradigm, which can bring about end results that provide a more holistic and experiential understanding of the subjects examined. Importantly, it should be noted that, through reviewing the relevant literature, emergent patterns have been identified regarding self-ethical consumption. However, the research recognises the influence of the existing supposition and theoretical framework from the literature on the rationalisation and interpretation of the phenomenon studied. Therefore, the overall focus and different factors that the current research will explore, in order to generate an in-depth understanding of the self-concept in the context of ethical consumption, are presented in Figure 2.3 and Table 2.3.

Figure 2.3: Factors explored in the current research

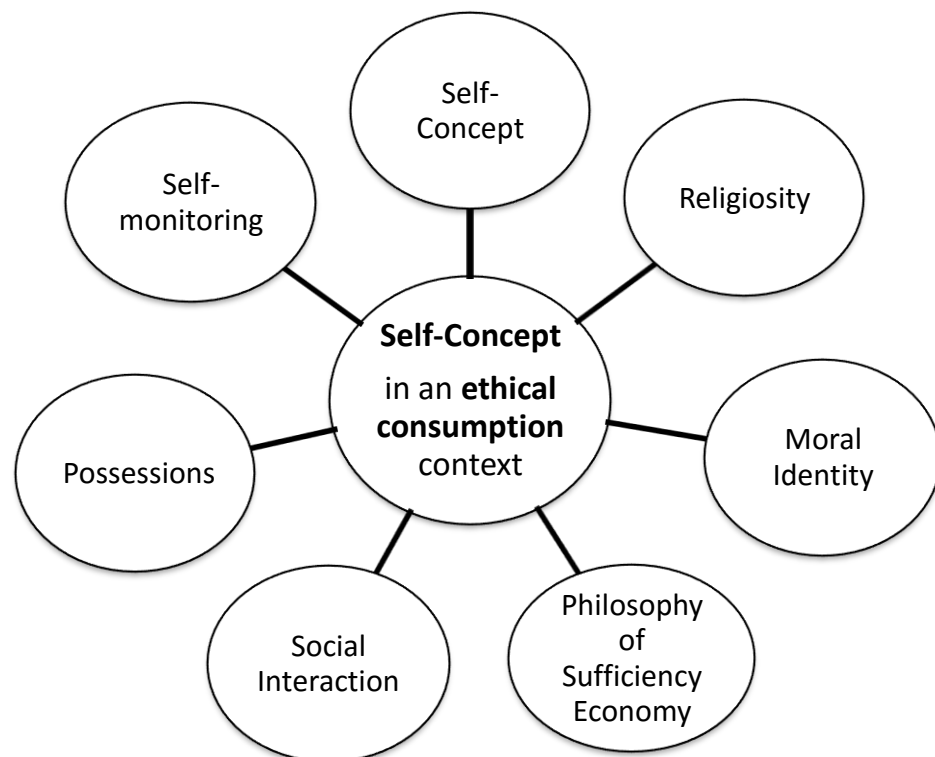


Table 2.3 Overall focus of the current research

Main research focus	Context	Methodology and research method	Research setting
Self-concept	Ethical consumption	Qualitative phenomenological approach: In-depth interview further (discussion in Chapter 3)	Thailand

With respect to the research standpoint, the underlying concept of phenomenology will be discussed in Chapter 3. As mentioned above, the current research does not intend to completely put aside all preassumptions, or the knowledge gained from the literature review. Thus, the existential phenomenology is elaborated upon in the following chapter. The research strategy and other methodological issues will be also described therein.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter attempts to explore consumer ethics through ethical consumption from a primarily psychological perspective. The self-concept is used as the centre of attention, in terms of the extent to which one's self plays a crucial role when engaging in ethical consumption. To review the self-concept in relation to ethical consumption as detailed in empirical studies, the literature is classified into four main areas: self-concept, self-concept in a context of ethical consumption, self-monitoring, and particularly ethics and consumption in Thailand. Self-concept has long been studied using different paradigms, including trait or personality (e.g. Roger, 1959; Marsden and Littler, 1998; Burr and Butt, 1992), behavioural (e.g. Reed, 2002), and cognitive approaches (e.g. Bettman, 1979; Kihlstrom and Klein, 1994). However, the most-mentioned

definition of self-concept is that set forth by Rosenberg (1979, p. 7), which states that “the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings have reference to himself as an object”. Regarding the dimensions of one’s self concept, it is recognised that early studies approached self-concept from the basic viewpoint of a single self approach (Bellenger et al., 1976; Birdwell, 1968; Grubb and Hupp, 1968; Grubb and Stern, 1971), referring to terms such as actual self, real self, and basic self. Others considered self-concept according to the dual self-construct tradition, namely ideal self or desired self – the image of oneself one would like to be (Belch 1978; and Sirgy, 1980). More recent studies have attempted to add other dimensions into the self (Lee, 1990; Hogg et al., 1996), including terms such as social self and ideal social self, which relates to social context. Moreover, possessions, as proposed by Belk (1988), and significant others based on social interaction (e.g. Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; Hogg, 1996; Markus and Kitayama, 1991), can influence one’s self-concept.

By considering the self-concept in the context of consumption, the self-image congruence model is suggested by Grubb et al. (1967) to describe the convergence between self-image and product-image. To some extent, this model relates to social interaction, where the self can be enhanced from accepted social meanings. So far, however, there has been little discussion about the self-concept in relation to ethical consumption in the area of consumer ethics. In particular, the Asian context regarding the self-concept and ethics is still limited (Singhapakdi et al., 2000). Among these limited studies, Singhapakdi et al. (1990, 1991, 1994, 2000), for instance, conducted empirical studies relating to ethical perception, religiosity, and moral philosophies with respect to marketing ethics, within a context of questionable behaviour among organisation and managers in Thailand. However, these studies did not take

account of ethics from the perspective of consumers. Therefore, closing this gap in the literature is the main intention of the current research project.

With regards to ethical consumption and consumers, the Hunt-Vitell's (1986, 1993) general theory of ethical decision-making was one of the initial models to incorporate personal characteristics into its framework. This, in turn, relates to different substantive issues of the self. However, this theory is limited to a set of rules and codes of conduct used to guide ethical decisions. With respect to the limitations of the normative approach to ethics, some researchers have highlighted that individuals' ethics and morality are flexible, in which the prescribed rules cannot always be applied to all situations, especially with respect to everyday experiences among consumers (e.g. Lovett and Jordan, 2010). This results in a movement towards more descriptive approaches that are multifaceted and situational in nature (e.g. Caruana, 2007a ; Luedicke et al., 2010).

Moreover, apart from self-concept in relation to ethical consumption, religiosity is focused on as an antecedent of morality, moral identity, and ethical behaviour (e.g. Vitell et al., 2009). Moral identity is one of the aspects that previous studies have used to investigate moral and ethical motivation, claiming that moral reasoning alone is insufficient to understand the subjects (Aquino and Reed, 2002). As moral identity relates to psychological constructs and social contexts, it is linked more to descriptive ethics. This can be seen in Luedicke et al.'s (2010) study, in which consumer morality is shown to manifest in a wide spectrum of cultural meanings, and from which consumer identity work is formed.

Self-monitoring is also one of the powerful factors that can guide and control human behaviour (Synder, 1974). Therefore, this could imply that self-monitoring could, to some extent, help individuals to observe appropriate or acceptable behaviour, and thus lead to ethical actions. In the literature, although consumer studies have tested self-monitoring in the consumption context, the area of consumer ethics in particular is still under-studied in terms of its role and associations.

Particularly, in the Thai context regarding ethics and morality, Buddhism mostly influences various aspects of life among Thai people. Also, with strong support from the Thai government and powerful campaigns of the sufficiency economy philosophy, this philosophy has lied at the heart of Thailand's development and people's way of living. The concept involves the extent to which Thai social development and personal development, concerning sustainability, balanced lifestyles, and ethical behaviour (Piboolsravut, 2004).

From the literature review, four gaps can be identified from the existing self-concept and ethical consumption literature. Firstly, although self-concept has long been studied in the consumer domain, far too little attention has been paid to the self in terms of the phenomenological paradigm. Rather, most consumer research has heavily employed the self as a form of social-cognition, focusing on consumers' passive information processing (e.g. Hogg and Garrow, 2003; Graeff, 1996; Ross, 1971; Landon, 1974; Hosany and Martin, 2011).

Secondly, it is recognised that self-concept and self-monitoring in the ethical consumption context is still under-studied (Kavak et al., 2009). There has been some attempt from Shaw and Shiu (2002) to include self-identity into their Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985, 1991), however it has not

precisely clarified and reflected the notion of the self, as self-identity is only briefly mentioned therein. In addition, the TPB is based on the behavioural perspective, which focuses closely on the external drivers of consumer behaviour, meaning that some relevant internal factors that affect the self are ignored. Thus, the self-concept in relation to ethical consumption has not yet generated a complete understanding of the role one's self plays when considering ethical consumption.

Thirdly, this thesis recognises an opportunity to explore the self and ethical consumption using a more flexible, descriptive approach, rather than restricting itself to a certain set of prescribed behavioural rules. The descriptive approach offers moral meanings that can be explored more appropriately using day-to-day consumption experiences. Crane and Desmond (2002) and Luedicke et al. (2010) pointed out that moral meanings and ethics are still understudied in the contemporary consumption context. By adopting the descriptive approach to consumer ethics research, the real-life situation, in which consumers are not guided by social norms and regulations, can be addressed. Thus, considering the fact that morals and ethics are more flexible and fluid in relation to the self, the study is able to capture the full picture and obtain a deep understanding of ethical consumption.

Lastly, the consumer research on the self-concept and ethical consumption in the East Asian context is still very limited (Singhapakdi et al., 2000). Although some empirical research carried out by Singhapakdi et al. (1990, 1991, 1994, 2000) has been conducted in Thailand, it has only looked at ethical issues from the corporate side.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology:

3.1 Introduction

This chapter build upon how the role of self-concept in the ethical consumption context should be focused and the exploration of such phenomenon should be conducted. As the self is considered as an experiencer and a moral entity, the actual experiences of ethical consumption explored through the self. With respect to the research methodology used in establishing a self-congruity theory (in relation to self-concept and consumption), it is recognised that self-congruity, in the consumption context, was heavily studied between 1965 and 1982. These studies were based on a quantitative approach using staple scales and semantic differentials (see, for instance, Landor, 1974; Bellenger et al., 1976; Ross, 1971; Hughes and Guerrero, 1971; Sirgy, 1980, 1982a).

However, during the late 1990s, self-congruity theory started to gain the attention of a more flexible research design. Hogg was one of the initiators who studied self-congruity in the marketing/consumer domain, implementing a mixed-method approach (Hogg and Michell, 1996; Hogg et al., 2000). Later, consumer researchers attempted to explore self-congruity theory and its applications by adopting a purely qualitative approach, searching for the crucial meanings of the phenomenon (Ahuvia, 2005; Banister and Hogg, 2001, 2004; Karanika and Hogg, 2010). However, although the qualitative research method has been introduced to self-congruity theory and the self-concept in the marketing/consumer area, there is still room for the current research project to

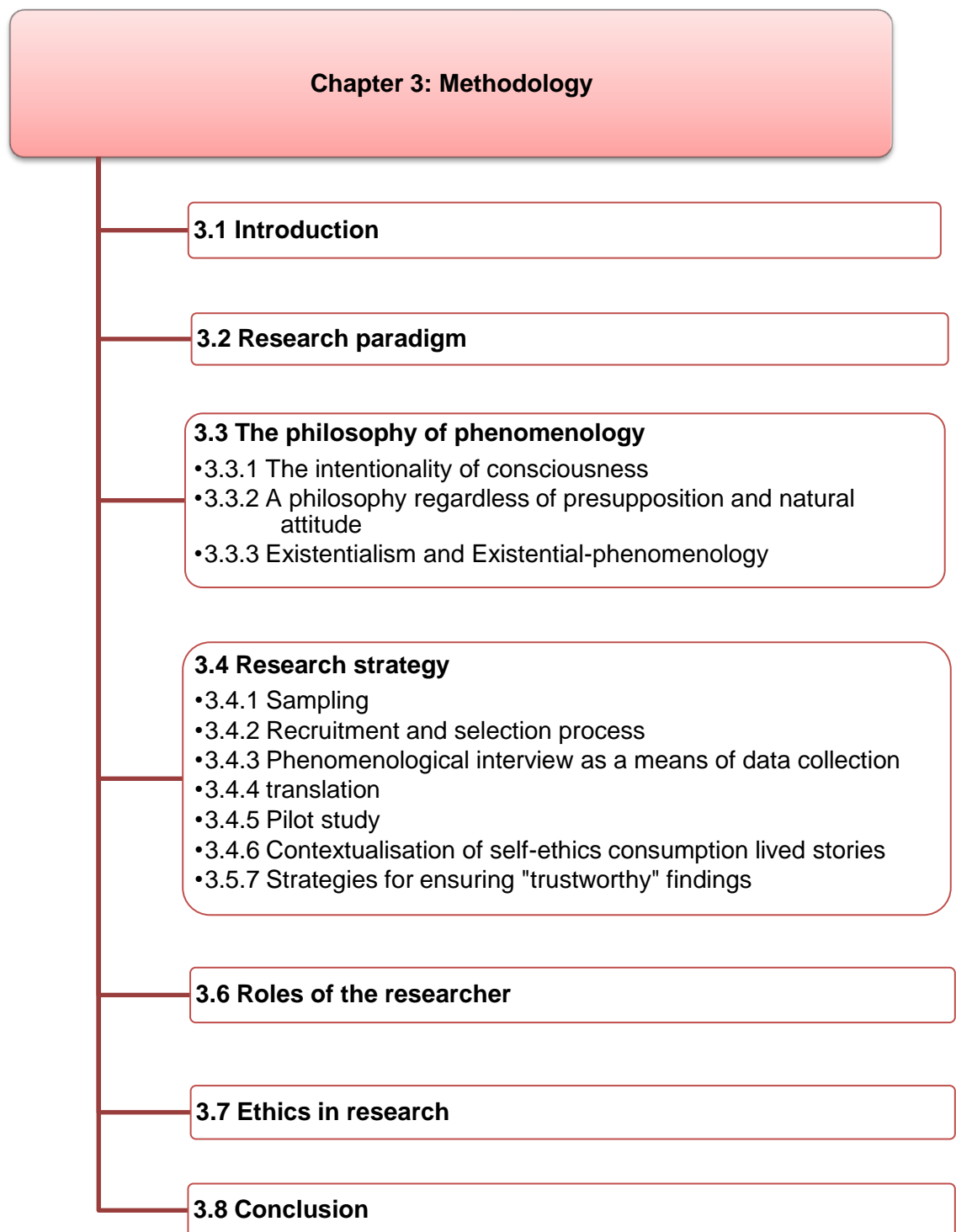
fill the gap, thereby gaining more insight to ethical consumption through self-congruity.

Moreover, in relation to one's self-concept and self-related (such as self-identity) and ethical consumption, the self has been influenced by consumer ethics (see, for example, De Pelsmacker et al., 2005; Rawwas et al., 2006; Weaver and Agle, 2002). These studies seem to put the concept of self within a fixed social system approach that ignores the complexity of consumers' ethical behaviour and the crucial meanings therein. Accordingly, Cherrier (2005) recognises the complexities of consumer culture and ethical concerns that need a more flexible research design, which in turn enables the study to generate insightful understandings of the phenomenon. Thus, qualitative inquiry through existential-phenomenology is adopted in the current research to explore in-depth meanings that reside in the notion of self and the ethical consumption context. Particularly, the consumer's lived experiences are focused on throughout the research process.

As the research paradigm, or worldview, can guide the research direction, the ontology and epistemology of the current research is presented in this chapter (section 3.2). The current research uses existential phenomenology as its fundamental paradigm. Therefore, the philosophy of phenomenology is discussed, as it contains some assumptions that underlie existential phenomenology (section 3.3). These assumptions relate to: the intentionality of consciousness (section 3.3.1), regardless of presuppositions and natural attitudes (section 3.3.2), and the concept of existentialism and existential phenomenology (section 3.3.3).

Next, the research strategy is highlighted how the research implementation proceeds (section 3.4) and outlined different topics relating to this (section 3.4). Once the research strategy has been highlighted, the research strategy is introduced to underline how the research implementation proceeds (section 3.4.1). Section 3.4.1 consists of different topics relating to the research strategy: the sampling (section 3.4.2), recruiting and selection process (section 3.4.3), phenomenological interview as a data-gathering method (section 3.4.4), translation (section 3.4.5), the pilot study (section 3.4.6), interpretative phenomenological analysis techniques (section 3.4.7), and strategies for ensuring “trustworthy” findings (section 3.4.8). The roles of the researcher are also indicated in section 3.5; the researcher recognises the “no harm” principle of research implementation, and therefore a summary of ethics in research is included in section 3.6. Finally, the conclusion in section 3.7 summarises all of the crucial points made in this chapter. A map of the methodology chapter is outlined in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: A structure of methodology – chapter 3



3.2 Research paradigm

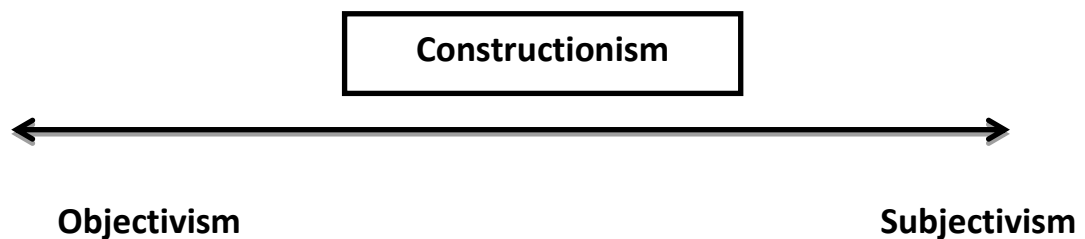
Without considering the research paradigm, the research could be seen as not recognising its own fundamental position. Guba (1990, p. 17) defines the term “paradigm” or “worldview” as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action”. These beliefs (within the paradigm) refer to philosophical assumptions, epistemologies, and ontologies (Crotty, 1998) which shape the practice of research or methodology. The current research project employs the worldview of constructionism, which is reflected in the choice to use an existential phenomenological methodology. To justify where the research places itself on the paradigmatic continuum, the theoretical perspectives underlying ontology (what is) and epistemology (what it means to know) (Crotty, 1998) which are embraced in this research need to be discussed.

The concern of the nature of reality is ontology, whereas epistemology relates to the nature of knowledge, including its possibility, scope, and general basis (Hamlyn, 1995). The current study is based on the ontological assumption that there is such a thing as “*being* the world”, in which reality or truth cannot be separated from its contextual world. This leads to a way of constructing knowledge or meaning in which the meaning derives from existence within and outside of engaging with the realities of our world. From this philosophical viewpoint, it draws upon the epistemology of “constructionism” by acknowledging that:

“There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is now discovered, but constructed [...] In this view of things, subject and object emerge as partners in the generation of meaning” (Crotty, 1998, pp. 8-9).

When considering the epistemology from different competing paradigms, it should be noted that there is a clear distinction between objectivism (positivist and post-positivist research), constructionism (intertwined with phenomenology), and subjectivism (structuralist, post-structuralist, postmodernist) (Crotty, 1998). Thus, to position the current research on a continuum from objectivism at one end of a range to subjectivism at the other, adopting constructionism can be presented as shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: The paradigmatic position of the current research on a continuum



On one end of the continuum, objectivism holds that reality and meaning are not related to any consciousness wherein the meaning has already existed, and is waiting to be discovered (Crotty, 1998). On the contrary, at the other end, subjectivism takes meaning into account, as it: “does not come out of an interplay between subject and object but is imposed on the object by the subject” (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). In addition, subjectivism seems to believe that meaning can be created from the unconscious mind, or even from dreams. Constructionism, however, argues that meaning is constructed out of objectivity and the conscious mind regarding its existence, rejecting the objective truth and pre-existing meaning and considering meaning to be neither objective nor subjective (Crotty, 1998), but suggesting that the meaning lies upon *being* and its context. In line with the epistemology of constructionism, knowledge is embraced for the current research with respect to the extent to which human

beings engage in the world, which in turn supports or creates a new emergent knowledge.

As discussed above, the philosophical stance of ontology and epistemology then reflect on the choice of methodology in this study. Based on the underlying concept from constructionism of *being in the world*, this research therefore employs the existential phenomenological approach, within qualitative inquiry. This is because the researcher believes that reality emerges from being in our world in relation to its contextual and social phenomena, so that meaning cannot be separate from its contexts. This research is implementing an inductive approach (Robson, 2002), in which initial abstract ideas move toward developing a general concept of the investigated phenomenon. Also, phenomenological (in-depth) interviews are utilised in this phenomenological research. Therefore, the philosophy of phenomenology will be highlighted in the following section, as this lies behind the existential phenomenology. The phenomenological interview method will be discussed later in the research strategy section, in order to explore psychological engagement, lived experiences, and personal attitudes of the participants studied.

3.3 The philosophy of phenomenology

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), who has been considered as a founder of phenomenology, opposed the idea of “naturalism” – the belief that empirical science is the most powerful indicator of truth. From this opposition, Husserl (1931) insisted that lived experience or lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) is a primary philosophical understanding of all human activities since their beginnings and orientation. The notion of lifeworld, or *Lebenswelt*, represents: “the world of

ordinary, immediate experience [...] the concrete context of all experiences” (Cope, 2003, p.7).

By looking at the term itself from the Greek words *phainomenon* as an appearance and *logos* as reason or word (Pivcevic, 1970), Pettit (1969) literally refers to phenomenology as the study or description of phenomena; and the: “description of things as one experiences them, or of one’s experiences of things.” (Hammond et al., 1991, p.1). In short, the main purpose of phenomenological inquiry is to reveal the essences of experiences (phenomena), whilst describing the underlying reason for those experiences (Pivevic, 1970).

Also, as phenomenology presumes that they are “things themselves”, experiences can be seen as the objects for an individual’s understanding of the phenomena (Crotty, 1998). From the idea of the “things themselves”, it means that the extent to which an individual directly experiences is the objects of the particular experience by which it existed before the individual could even think, interpret, or give meaning to it. This idea suggested in phenomenology is indeed to some extent grounded in constructionism, relating to a world of meaning (Crotty, 1998, p.79) as explained:

“The mélange of cultures and sub-cultures into which we are born provides us with meanings. These meanings we are taught and we learn in a complex and subtle process of enculturation. They establish a tight grip upon us and, by and large, shape our thinking and behaviour throughout our lives.”

Therefore, it can be seen that these elements of social and cultural heritage are imprinted on one’s experiences, giving meaning to life. Based on a phenomenological standpoint, Husserl (1931) indicates that one must engage in

acts of consciousness in order to reflect on essential experiences. From the focus on consciousness, this then leads to intentionality.

3.3.1 The intentionality of consciousness

Husserl (1931, p.245) illustrates intentionality as: “a concept which at the threshold of phenomenology is quite indispensable as a starting-point and basis.” Derived from Brentano’s (1874) concept of intentionality, Husserl emphasises that: “consciousness is always consciousness of something” (Crotty, 1998, p.79), in which the *intentional object* refers to the object of consciousness seen in many forms, such as perception, image, memory, and meaning (Husserl, 1939/1973).

Intentionality demonstrates the essential relationship between conscious subjects and their objects (Crotty, 1988). It can be implied that, with respect to phenomenology, the reality of an object is related to one’s consciousness of it (Creswell, 2007). However, one scholar, Moran (2000, p.16), attempts to use the term “aboutness” to describe the intentionality of conscious experiences as: “every act of loving is a loving of something, every act of seeing is a seeing of something.” Hence, to elaborate on the description of experience from a phenomenological viewpoint with regard to constructionism, it can be claimed that one’s experience should not be separated from that which is experienced.

As phenomenology acknowledges the link between the conscious or subjective world and objective reality, Crotty (1998, p.79) describes that:

“An object is always an object for someone. The object, in other words, cannot be adequately described apart from the subject, nor can the subject be adequately described apart from the object. From a more existentialist viewpoint, intentionality bespeaks the relationship between us as human beings and our world. We are beings-in-the-world.

Because of this, we cannot be described apart from our world, just as our world – always a human world – cannot be described apart from us.”

This relationship between conscious subjects and objects leads to the rejection of the subject-object dichotomy. It is where the reality of an object is only viewed when it appears in consciousness, and within the meaning of experience of a person (Crotty, 1988). However, engaging with the external world in one’s private experience and vice versa can be seen more obviously through existential phenomenology, which is discussed further in section 3.3.3. On the contrary, from phenomenological thought, particularly from Edmund Husserl’s prime work of presuppositionless (1931), it is suggested that what we have in our (researcher’s) consciousness as all prejudgements should be *bracketed* (i.e. the act of setting aside the experiences) through the idea of:

“Phenomenology invites us to set aside all previous habits of thought, see through and break down the mental barriers which these habits have set along the horizons of our thinking [...] to learn to see what stands before our eyes” (Husserl, 1931, p.43).

“The ‘things themselves’, as phenomenologist understand the phrase, are phenomena that present themselves immediately to us as conscious human beings. Phenomenology suggests that, if we lay aside, as best we can, the prevailing understandings of those phenomena and revisit our immediate experience of them, possibilities for new meaning emerge for us or we witness at least an authentication and enhancement of former meaning” (Crotty, 1996).

So, the underlying values of *without* presupposition and natural attitude need to be discussed in more detail as the key fundamental issues in phenomenology.

3.3.2 A philosophy regardless of presupposition and natural attitude

A fresh perspective on things and the essences of the emerging lived experiences are the cornerstones of phenomenology and with the bracketing presuppositions from the phenomenological perspective; these significant concerns can be achieved. Husserl (1929/1973, p.54) argued that:

“Accurate essential intuition required a kind of prior mental purge of the untutored natural attitude that clutters the actual phenomena of lived experience with inessential factual assumptions.”

From Husserl’s point of view, it is wrong to allow those prior values and beliefs to distort and prejudice against the description of phenomena, instead a person: “places oneself in the sphere of absolute clear beginning” (Kockelmans, 1994, p.14). Bracketing in this case does not intend to change an experience, but rather to leave it perfectly as it was, in order to enhance and yield the structure of lived meaning (LeVasseur, 2003). As positively recognised, Husserl’s *epoche* (bracketing) concept has been implemented in many phenomenological researchers (e.g. Husserl, 1931; Moustakas, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Among these scholars, Moustakas (1994, p.34), for example, further extends the concept of *epoche* by introducing the phenomenological approach namely: “transcendental or psychological phenomenology” as: “in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time.” Regarding transcendental phenomenology, this focuses on a description of the experiences of participants, rather than on an interpretation.

In order to set aside such presuppositions, Husserl indicated that there is a need to suspend all of the “natural attitude” and focus on what he called a “philosophical or phenomenological attitude” or “transcendental attitude”

(Sokolowski, 2000). The key intention of philosophical attitude is to go beyond the natural attitude of the particular incident as described:

“When we move into the phenomenological attitude, we become something like detached observers of the passing scene or like spectators at a game. We become onlookers. We contemplate the involvements we have with the world and with things in it, and we contemplate the world in its human involvement. We are no longer simply participants in the world; we contemplate what it is to be a participant in the world and its manifestations.” (Sokolowski, 2000, p.48)

The suspension of natural attitude and the emphasis on bracketing are an attempt to sustain an intuitive thought by: “opening his eyes”, “not getting blinded” (Heron, 1992, p.164). Overall, the rejections of presupposition and natural attitude could refer back to the “things themselves” regarding Husserlian or transcendental phenomenology.

Nonetheless, completely removing the natural background or preconception in order to aim at a very pure phenomenal experience seems to provoke some crucial controversy. Mainly, it is criticised in respect of the transcendental ego and the notion of bracketing (LeVasseur, 2003). Even Moustakas (1994), who introduced the term of transcendental phenomenology, admitted that it is rare to perfectly achieve bracketing out one’s experiences before entering into the experiences of the subjects studied. The opposition of bracketing personal experiences could be seen more obviously among those who employ an interpretative approach to phenomenology (e.g. Van Manen, 1990). Van Manen (1990) argued that it is impossible for the researcher to become totally separated from the text.

Having a disagreement in attitude toward the concept of Husserl’s epoche, Heidegger’s (1962) *Being and Time* was among others that critically opposed

against being too strict on the states of consciousness and bracketing what have already existed in the world. This perspective then gives rise of the “existential phenomenology”, which allows to question what “being” itself is and to view phenomenology in a more practical and applicable way for the conducting research.

3.3.3 Existentialism and existential phenomenology

By adopting existential phenomenology, it can be noted that this involves a combining paradigm through the philosophy of existentialism and the methods of phenomenology (Valle and King, 1978). Fundamentally, the work known as *Existentialism and Humanism* of Sartre (1946) briefly describes existentialism that focuses on the idea of: “*existence precedes essence*” (Greetham, 2006, p.221), meaning that no pre-given essence or character determines a kind of person. As highlighted by Sartre:

“Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterward. If man as the existentialist sees him, is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself” (Greetham, 2006, p.221).

Yet, Sartre does not ignore those determined aspects of one’s existence, rather he claims that:

“Physically or biologically, it’s true human beings have a pre-existent makeup or essence. But morally, as a person in the full sense, our existence remains to be determined by the exercise of our free will. There are certainly limits to what we can make ourselves be by the exercise of this freedom. There is a human ‘situation’, within which the exercise of our freedom takes place, which includes not only our biological makeup but also the natural environment, social structures and so on, within which we exist” (Greetham, 2006, p.221).

From this existentialism standpoint, it strengthens in accordance with Heidegger's (1962) concept of *being*. As existence in the world is recognised, therefore the existing presupposition is not bracketed, while human beings should be considered regarding those existing (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Cope, 2003). Moreover, Heidegger (1962) insisted that consciousness should be not treated as a separate matter from *being in the world*. This is to further criticise Husserl's notion of phenomenological reduction (bracketing), because it is argued that prior conceptions and knowledge cannot be completely bracketed for the existentialists. So, Husserl's suggestion on transcendental ego is also rejected as a result of bracketing (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Although the notion of bracketing (*epoche*) is evidently opposed by the existentialists, Husserl's notion of lifeworld or *Lebenswelt* supports a voice of existential phenomenology. As the lifeworld takes into account the immediate experience and the concrete context of all experience, it enables the existential phenomenology to recognise all related human actions, such as thoughts, moods, efforts, and emotion not only from the reduction of one's consciousness (Stewart and Mickunas, 1974). However, it is noted that there is a distinction in terms of the lifeworld between Husserlian phenomenology and existential phenomenology. For existential phenomenology, the lifeworld is considered to be the ontological mean, whereas this is epistemology in Husserlian phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962). The distinction is that *being* is the starting point for existential phenomenology, while Husserl regards being only as a correlate of consciousness (Heidegger, 1975). This is summarised in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Distinctive characteristics of (pure) phenomenology and existential phenomenology

Philosophical worldview		
Types of Phenomenology	Transcendental (pure) phenomenology (Husserl, 1931).	Existential phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962).
Ontological focus	The idea of “things themselves” – phenomena show themselves directly to us as conscious human beings.	The idea of “beings-in-the-world” – experience and the world are a co-existing object.
Underlying ontological assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intentionality of consciousness as the rejection of the subject-object dichotomy. • It is “what we directly experience” (Crotty, 1998, p. 78) before starting to think, interpret, and give meaning to it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship between conscious subjects and their objects. • “Consciousness is always consciousness of something. An object is always an object for someone” (Crotty, 1998, p. 79). • The object and the subject cannot be separated, showing human beings and a social world relationship.
Epistemological focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ideal or essential structure of consciousness through “bracketing”. • Pure experiences without preconception and natural attitude. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Existence precedes essence” (Greetham, 2006, p. 221). • Experience of “being”.

In addition to those critiques of Husserlian or transcendental phenomenology, it can be claimed that what makes the existential phenomenology distinctive from other traditional scientific inquiries are the focuses on: contextual worldview, in-the-world, experience, first-person view, apodictic, holistic, and thematic

description (Thompson et al., 1989). As existential phenomenology is based on the ontology of *being* in-the-world, experience and the world are viewed as a co-existing object. This then allows this paradigm to explore a crucial pattern that emerges from a surrounding context of one's lived experience. For the lifeworld context, Sartre (1962) suggests that the meaning of an experience is actually located in the current context of that particular experience, when in turn the meaning is related to an ongoing situation of the lifeworld. Unlike other traditions that examine a subject studied from a third-person perspective, the existential phenomenology describes lived experience from a first-person viewpoint, being: "the experts live their knowledge" (Thompson, et al., 1989, p.135). Also, it aims to make the understanding of the pattern emerging from the phenomenon studied as apodictic. For a holistic understanding and thematic description, they are somewhat related to the "hermeneutical circle" (Bleicher, 1980), which is further explained in section 3.6.5.

It could be seen that with existential phenomenology, it allows greater possibility for research to capture human actions from various forms, not restricted to considering only an abstract of the one's consciousness. Because of the recognition of man's existence and preconception, a person could still be a part of his lived world. Therefore, the research that employs this paradigm would be able to attach to its own experiences, make sense with the phenomena, and create extended or new knowledge.

3.4 Research strategy

Methodologically, field study was conducted using in-depth, phenomenological interviews based on a qualitative approach. Meaningful data can be collected

from words and language within a specific context (of adult Thai consumers regarding their ethical consumption), focusing on perceptions, personal ethical beliefs, the moral self, shared experiences, religious values, and narratives.

Taking into account the existential phenomenology through a qualitative approach, the current research project can obtain insight into “people’s lived experience” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 10), which in turn is useful for exploring a new or unfamiliar area (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). However, this research not only aims to explore the phenomenon at the surface level, but also intends to consider the deeper-layered reality, thereby gaining not only descriptive information, but also the insightful meanings of the subject and its associations. By adopting an existential phenomenology paradigm, the in-depth interviews were carried out in the current research by employing the phenomenological interview technique (Thompson et al., 1989) as a key method to collect the data (this will be described in detail in section 3.4.3). Moreover, in order to analyse data from the phenomenological interviews, it is necessary to refer to: “interpretative phenomenological analysis” (IPA) (Smith and Osborn, 2008; Smith et al., 2009) in order to interpret the descriptive data into meaningful themes, allowing for an inductive conceptual framework at the end. This will be illustrated further in the following section on data analysis technique.

3.4.1 Sampling

With respect to phenomenological interviewing, Patton (1990, p. 104) highlights that in order to gather meaningful data “one must undertake in-depth interviews with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest”. From

this suggestion, the current research chooses its participants based on “purposeful sampling”, as explained by Patton (1990, p. 169):

“The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling.”

In addition to purposeful sampling, “snowball or chain sampling” was used to gain sufficient in-depth information on the phenomenon studied. Snowball or chain sampling, in this case, is implemented to identify the potential participants (who have experienced ethical consumption) from the participants who have already been interviewed, aiming at information-rich cases, good examples for study, and good interview subjects (Patton, 1990). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the chosen samples are not intended to be representative or generalisable to the diverse population who engage in ethical consumption. Rather, the samples were selected for the meanings lying in the self-ethical consumption context, allowing the *opportunity to learn* (Stake, 1994).

In order to acquire purposeful samples to explore the phenomenon under study, potential participants for the research project were selected from a targeted population that is segmented by geographic, demographic, behavioural, and psychographic dimensions, as follows:

Table 3.2: Targeted population

Dimension	Description
Geographic	Thailand – Bangkok (capital city) and greater Bangkok
<u>Gender</u>	Male and Female
<u>Age</u>	25-60
Behavioural	- People who have consumed ethical products or engaged in ethical consumption and are concerned about ethical values within their consumption.

Psychographic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People who are concerned about ethical values in their consumption. - People who hold religious beliefs, paying attention to the religious principles.
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Also, Thailand is used as the primary research setting as this enables the researcher to explore the religious influence (through one's self) on ethical consumption. Accordingly, a Gallup Poll (2008) revealed that Thailand is one of the strongest countries in terms of religiosity, placing high value on the importance of religion. However, it needs to note that regardless of any particular type of religion, the current study focuses on the degree of religiosity. This allows the study not to limit itself to the specific principles within one religion. Moreover, as a phenomenological approach usually attempts to find a fairly homogeneous sample (Smith and Osborn, 2008), the potential participants were chosen only from those who live in the Bangkok and greater Bangkok area.

For the age criterion, it was found from the empirical studies that adult and older consumers are more likely to be susceptible to ethical concerns/decisions than young consumers (Vitell 2009). Therefore, to highlight ethical consumption beliefs in this research, adult consumers aged between 25 and 60 are the focus, regardless of gender. Also, as the research focuses on the particular phenomenon of the self-concept within a context of ethical consumption, the samples or would-be participants chosen from the targeted population are only those who have experienced and are concerned about ethical values and religious beliefs.

Phenomenological research aims to obtain sufficient in-depth understanding of each individual interview. This can be achieved through a small sample; as

explained by Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 56), in committing to a detailed interpretative account of the case in question: “many researchers are recognising that this can only realistically be done on a very small sample – thus in simple terms one is sacrificing breadth for depth”. For example, previous consumer researchers have used small samples to examine their subjects based on qualitative inquiry (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006; Fournier, 1998a; Thompson, 1996, 2005). Polkinghorne (1989) also suggests an appropriate sample size to be between 5 and 25 individuals for phenomenological studies. Taking into account this recommended sample size as well as the point of data saturation, the total sample size for this research is 10, and each participant was subjected to an in-depth interview. Male and female participants were selected in equal proportions, so that balanced, meaningful results can be obtained for both genders. With 10 individual interviews, in-depth descriptions and insightful meanings of the phenomenon under the study is allowed to emerge.

Furthermore, to ensure ethics in the research, only participants (adult Thai consumers) who are considered as sufficiently competent are included in the project. This is because competent people can make their own decisions (Sture, 2010) (as discussed further in section 3.8, which covers ethics in research).

3.4.2 Recruitment and selection process

In this research, the participants of the in-depth, phenomenological interviews were purposively chosen from the targeted population, who are professionals and housewives. The rationale for selecting only the professionals and housewives is that they are the people who have a stable social status and are part of the affluent ABC1 socio-economic group. There are researches indicate

that consumers who are active ethical consumers and choose ethical products (e.g. fairtrade, organic) are more likely to be in an upper middle to high social class (Cowe and Williams, 2000; Nicholls and Opal, 2005; Fairtrade Foundation, 2006).

Before recruiting the potential participants, leaflets were given out at Royal Project Foundation <http://www.royalprojectthailand.com/> (where they sell organic, fairtrade and OTOP products) and through personal contacts. This is to raise awareness of the research being conducted as well as to inform about the interview location, date and time, topic studied, and most importantly the data recording method, in this case, audio-recording. In addition, all interviews took place in a relaxed, friendly, secure and non-threatening environment during day-time. This is to encourage the research participants to be more open and willing to talk.

As some participants were chosen from work contacts, the current research also ensures that *power relationship* (Sture, 2010) did not exist during the recruiting process. So, a statement clarifying that “you will have your own rights to make decisions to attend the interview, which will not cause any consequences” was included in the advertisement from the beginning of the recruitment process (see consent form in *Appendix B*). However, reassurance of informed consent, confidentiality, and “opt-in” and “opt-out” options (Sture, 2010) was made on the day of the interview before gathering any data. This is to ensure that no other force or authority would affect the decision-making of the potential research participants. These concerns are discussed in more detail in section 3.7 which outlines ethics in research.

3.4.3 Phenomenological interview as a means of data collection

In line with the phenomenological paradigm, the phenomenological interview method was initially proposed by Thompson et al. (1989), and allows some specified experiences to be gained from a first-person description, wherein the participant largely sets the course of the dialogue. Thompson et al. (1989, p. 138) also emphasise that the phenomenological interview: “is perhaps the most powerful means of attaining an in-depth understanding of another person’s experience”. Methodologically, the phenomenological interview is claimed to be idiographic, as Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 6) highlight that it: “stresses the importance of letting one’s subject unfold its nature and characteristics during the process of investigation”. Due to its nature, adopting the phenomenological interview as a key data collection method facilitates the current research to explore in-depth information on ethical consumption through one’s self-concept via his/her lived experience.

Although the phenomenological interview seems to complement the unstructured interview (with no a priori set of questions), for instance, Thompson et al. (1989, 1990) and Cope (2003, 2005) indicate that giving a large amount of control to participants is a methodological risk:

“It is important to remember that the freedom given to the participants can be a daunting prospect for the researcher, particularly in terms of entering the interview rather exposed and ‘empty-handed’” (Cope, 2005, p180).

To balance this issue of research-participant control, the current research employed the semi-structured interview technique, which still allows the researcher and participants to engage in a dialogue as it gives some freedom for the participants to talk around the topics, but uses an initial set of questions.

Unlike the structured interview, which is conducted in an exact research format that can be called “interview-based survey” (Robson, 2002, p. 270), the semi-structured interview promotes a more flexible interaction between the researcher and participant. Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 58) explain that, where a set of questions is used as an interview schedule, “the interview will be guided by the schedule rather than be dictated by it”. Furthermore, consistent with the phenomenological interviewing approach, the researcher can prepare some questions to ask, and can then grasp, as the interview progresses, the psychological and social reality of the respondents, and tailor the questions accordingly (Smith and Osborn, 2008). In this case, the respondents are still viewed as experiential experts on the subject studied, where rapport and novel aspects of the subject can be promoted.

In general, data collection involves two sources of data: primary and secondary (Ghauri et al., 1995). In the current research, the secondary data has been included in the project in the form of the literature review (chapter 2). All relevant published journal articles, books (e.g. marketing texts), and public information (e.g. a map of the importance of religiosity) were collected and reviewed in order to explore what has been studied in the research areas: self-concept and ethical consumption; and to use as supporting documents.

The primary data was collected mainly from ten semi-structured (in-depth) phenomenological interviews. The primary concern related to the interviewees’ perceptions, in which the phenomenological standpoint regarding the essence of their lived experiences is the main focus (Thompson et al., 1989). In particular, the key focuses of data-gathering in this research are personal religious and ethical beliefs, narratives of individuals’ possessions, experiences

of ethical products, and perceptions of the self-ethical consumption phenomenon to be investigated.

Based on the interview method, direct interaction between the researcher or interviewer and participants is in the form of two-way communication (Robson, 2002). During the interviews of this study, the conversation was interactive between the researcher and the participants. In practice, the in-depth phenomenological interview follows the conducted interview schedule shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Interview schedule – description of the interviews

Sequence of questions	Tasks
	Individual Interview
Advanced preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-mail reminder or SMS sent one day before the scheduled interview to secure a commitment from the participant. - In the message sent, informed consent, confirmation of date and time, location, and duration of the interview should all be included. ++ Time frame was flexible between <u>1 to 2 hours</u>
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The participant was thanked for their attendance. - Refreshments were given and the participant was informed that these will be available throughout the interview. - Consent was confirmed and agreement given to use voice recording and note-taking. - A consent form was signed (formal consent). - The topic being studied was introduced. - the purpose of the interview was explained. - Confidentiality is assured. - The participant was informed that his or her responses were neither right nor wrong. - The participant was informed that agreement or

	disagreement is OK.
“Warm-up”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General questions were asked about the participant and ethical products in general (to open the conversation), e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Can you tell me about yourself (briefly)? ii) Can you tell me about your experience of ethical consumption?
Main body of interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (if) “specific term” used in the interview, then clarification needed. - More specific questions were asked: e.g. personal religious practices and beliefs, ethical consumption with regards to their self-concept, self-control and moral/ethical behaviour, etc. - Key follow-up questions were asked based on the participant’s description of their experience. - More focused questions were asked (if needed). - Reactions, meanings, facts and lived experiences were looked for. - Probes and prompts were used.
“Cool-off”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The session was wrapped up by summarizing the discussion to make sure of what the participant has said. - The participant was asked whether they would like to clarify things or give more details. - Tension was dispersed, if relevant.
Closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A significant closing statement was given if needed. - An incentive was given. - The participant was thanked and “goodbyes” were exchanged.
<p>* <u>Refreshments</u>, consisting of beverages (tea, coffee, and soft drinks) and biscuits, was available throughout the entire interview.</p> <p>** <u>Setting</u> was a relaxed, secure and non-threatening environment in an attempt to encourage openness and willingness to talk.</p> <p>*** <u>Equipment used</u> included <u>audio-recording</u>, paper (notes), pen, watch.</p>	

With respect to the interview procedure, each in-depth interview took approximately one to two hours. However, some participants were re-visited for the interview. The revisiting interview happened, in some cases, as at the first time interview some participants were not genuinely opened to talk about their lives. So the researcher had to arrange for the revisit. Then, the study found that relationship was developed between the research and the research participant as the time has passed. They tend to be more opened and even willing to talk about more sensitive and personal stories. This could be because Thai people, Asian, are usually introverted and need time to develop trust with other people. Other studies also revealed that in Asian culture people are more in introverted comparing to Western culture (e.g. McCrae, 2004; Chon, 2014). This introversion can be related to Asian culture's emphasis on tradition, conservatism, and compliance (McCrae, 2004.).

There was an initial set of open-ended questions used in the interviews. Importantly, to ensure the clarity of these questions, theoretical or technical language was avoided, and more everyday understandable terms are used instead. Overall, in each interview, the participants were asked to describe their experiences of ethical consumption, reflect on their self in an ethical context, and narrate their personal religious practices and beliefs with reference to consumption. Throughout the interview, the discussion focused on what experiences felt like at the time, and on reflection about any lasting impressions or impact the experiences had. In addition, during the interviews the information given was recorded by note-taking and audio-recording; consent for this was gained and mutually agreed before proceeding with the research (informed consent is discussed further in section 3.7, *Appendix B*). Also, at the end of each interview, the participant was received some incentive in a form of gift

voucher of organic products. This incentive is a way to say “thank you” and show appreciation to the participants. It is worth noting that in Thai culture it is common to give something in return if someone helps you. Giving money to the participants might seem to be too direct and rude among Thai people. So this study decided to approach the participants indirectly in such situation.

3.4.4 Translation

Twinn (1998) suggests that qualitative data should be transcribed in the original language in order to reduce the difficulties associated with the translation and interpretation of verbatim data. Therefore, in this research, the interview data is firstly transcribed in Thai (the local language), and then translated into English.

The research is thus implemented forward and backward translation (Brislin, 1970, 1986). In taking translation ideals into practice, the interview schedules and open-ended questions is written in English and translated into the target language (Thai). This is called “forward translation”, which refers to the extent to which the research material (a set of questions) is translated from the original (English) language into the target language. However, before these translated open-ended questions are used in the actual data collection stage, a pilot study is implemented in order to ensure the questions’ credibility and trustworthiness (as further discussed in detail in section 3.4.7).

After the phenomenological interview, the interview data is translated back into English. This is called “back translation”, which refers to the process of translating the data from the target (Thai) language back into the original (English) language. Some studies have attempted to focus translation processes on world equivalence (see, for instance, Larkin et al., 2007; Usunier, 1999). Nonetheless, there is still some inherent flaw in the cross-cultural

translation process, as each language can create its own meanings. Greertz (1983, p. 59) also notes that: “individuals in different cultures are neither bounded, interpreted nor organized as a whole”. Therefore, it is more appropriate to intend to “convey meaning using words rather than literally translated equivalents” (Temple, 1997, p. 610) when the interview data or instrument is translated into a different language.

In order to develop an instrument used cross-culturally, Hunt and Bhopal (2004, p. 621) point out that the researcher should “focus upon the similarity of concept rather than upon equivalence of items [...] It may not be necessary to have the exact comparison as long as the underlying purpose of the question is the same”. Likewise, Irvin et al. (2008) explain that when attention is on the issue of concept equivalence, it allows studies to obtain the same meaning in two or more cultures. Hence, it is more rational for the current research to emphasise consistency in terms of meanings and concepts when implementing the translation between the English and Thai language, and vice versa.

3.4.5 Pilot study

Three pilot interviews were conducted before the actual interviews, in order to test the trustworthiness of the general open-ended questions, and evaluate the smooth implementation of the research. With regards to the limited time and resources, only three in-depth interviews were carried out, and each interview was last approximately one hour. These pilot interviews aim to ensure that the questions encourage the participants to talk openly from a general topic level, and from there progress to more personal and insightful ideas. This could be one proactive way in which to reduce the chance of potential problems occurring in the research project.

Moreover, before starting the interview the participants were informed that it was a pilot study. This is because it allows the participants to evaluate the quality of the interview in a timely manner. If there is any vague and improper content, or other relevant interview issues, the open-ended questions or the interview procedure will be readjusted and improved before the actual scheduled interviews are conducted.

3.4.6 Contextualisation of self-ethical consumption lived stories

The term “contextualisation” is used here in an attempt to avoid the heading of “data analysis”. Accordingly, Hycner (1999) criticises the connotation of “analysis” in phenomenological research, pointing out that the: “term [analysis] usually means a ‘breaking into parts’ and therefore often means a loss of the whole phenomenon [...whereas ‘contextualisation’ implies an...] investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole” (p. 161). Contextualising the data facilitates the assumption of existential phenomenology, which aims to comprehend both lived experiences, and meanings emerging from social contexts (Thompson et al., 1989). This could be inferred to a process of interpretative activity focusing on understanding: “understanding in the sense of identifying or empathizing with and understanding as trying to make sense of it” (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 54). Thus, to emphasise the inferential process, the combination of analysis and interpretation (Spiggle, 1994), and the hermeneutical circle (Thompson et al., 1994), the current research adopts “interpretative phenomenological analysis” (IPA) as an approach to contextualise the data.

The hermeneutical circle offers a means by which to deliver distinct meanings through different focuses on: methodology (Hirschman, 1986), philosophical

viewpoint (Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy, 1988), and general model (Thompson et al., 1989). Bleicher (1980) defines the "hermeneutical circle" as the interpretation of a part-to-whole. To further explain this circle, Thompson et al. highlight (1989, p.141) that:

"In existential-phenomenological interpretation, the part-to-whole process occurs in two phases. First, the interpretive group seeks an idiographic (individual) understanding of each interview, which involves viewing each transcript to its overall content. After each transcript has been interpreted at the idiographic level, a new part-to-whole phase begins in which separate interviews are related to each other and common patterns identified."

The implementation of this hermeneutical circle can finally generate the "global themes" (Kvale, 1983). In order to help generate more relevant themes with respect to the phenomena, Thompson et al. (1989) also suggest different metaphors for use in this process: pattern, figure or ground, and seeing.

In addition to the hermeneutical circle used to interpret the collected data, themes, categorization comparison, and abstraction are focused on in this project, while the data interpretation represents an attempt to "[seek] patterns in meanings" (Spiggle, 1994, p. 499). In order to implement the analysis, general themes are set at the surface level to see what is happening in the phenomenon examined. The data can then be sorted into categories and further subcategories.

As the current research aims to explore how one's self-concept displays ethical consumption experiences, so are comparisons of these lived experiences focused on in terms of their differences and similarities. Particularly, the self-concept described by all participants is contextualised as the "self-portraits" – that is the way to tell stories of the person, or in short, participants' life stories

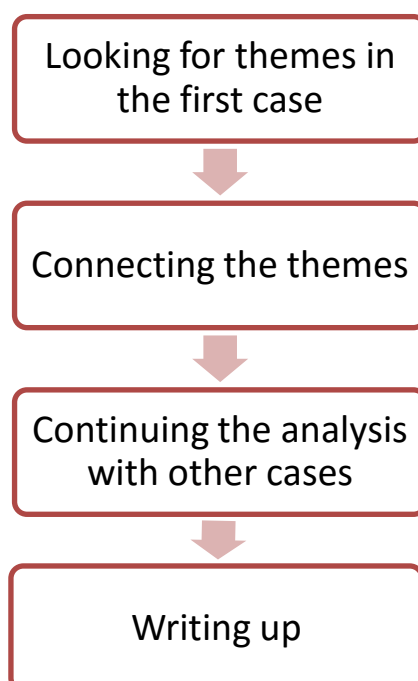
(e.g. Fournier, 1998; Goodson, 2001). Hopkinson and Hogg (2006) pointed out that an analysis of life story is concerned with biography and background; and how the person connects himself to the past, present, and future. In a more advanced contextual analysis, the abstraction is highlighted in that abstract constructs include “a number of more concrete instances found in the data that share certain common features” (Spiggle, 1994, p. 493). The data collected is then interpreted or made sense of, with the aim of forming coherent patterns in meanings and experiences regarding the phenomenon. The appropriate way to do this, as Wiseman (1987) suggested, is to focus on meanings among participants, whilst grasping the commonalities and parallels of their phenomenological perspectives. Overall, the data is interpreted and assigned a contextual basis by “interpretative phenomenological analysis” (IPA) underlying a thematic approach, hermeneutics, and a process of interpretation in an attempt to connect ideas within the data (Packer and Addison, 1989; Palmer, 1969; Smith and Osborn, 2008; Smith et al., 2009).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis

IPA concurs with the idea of Heidegger (1962, 1927) that phenomenological inquiry represents the beginning of an interpretative process. More specifically to context relevance, Smith et al. (2009, p. 32) illustrate that: “IPA also pursues an ideographic commitment, situating participants in their particular contexts, exploring their personal perspectives, and starting with a detailed examination of each case before moving to more general claims”. This again supports the inductive approach followed in this research, in which a conceptual framework can be developed at the end.

Meaning is central to the research focus, in terms of trying to understand the content and complexity of the meanings derived from the interpretation of interview transcriptions, rather than measuring their frequency. In order to effectively contextualise and interpret the interview data, a step-by-step guide using IPA (Smith et al., 1999) must be followed, as illustrated in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3: Steps taken in interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith and Osborn, 2008)



1) Looking for themes in the first case

The collected data is firstly be transcribed into an interview transcript using the audio recording. The transcript is read and re-read, in order for the researcher to become immersed in the context of the participant's experiences. Smith and Osborn (2008) describe this as the stage of throwing up new insight and free textual analysis. The researcher listens to the audio recording at least once whilst reading the transcript. Comments are made on similarities, differences, echoes, and contradictions in what the participant is saying. In addition, the

ideas generated from the scripts in the form of notes or comments need to reflect on the research questions. Then, initial notes are combined and transformed into themes that are emergent through the whole transcript.

2) Connecting the themes

During this stage, the researcher tries to make sense of the emergent themes in an attempt to connect between different themes from the transcript. However, some themes can be grouped together, whereas others must be treated as superordinate concepts (Smith and Osborn, 2008). In addition, it should be noted that identifying and developing emergent themes involves the hermeneutic circle (as discussed above). This research intends to capture the themes which are relevant with respect to self-ethical consumption.

3) Continuing the analysis with other cases

The research can then move on to make sense and contextualise using different interviews (transcript 2). The themes emerging from transcript 1 are used to help organise themes from transcript 2, but the research is still open to new issues emerging from this new interview transcript. Once all the interview transcripts are contextualised, the final themes are selected not purely on their prevalence, but also with reference to the richness of the specific passage highlighted in them.

4) Writing up

Significant statements or exhaustive descriptions of the experience are created to reflect the significant themes and meanings underlying the participants' experiences, narratives, and perceptions. This implies that the inductive research approach is employed at this stage. Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 76)

support that: “here the analysis becomes expansive again, as the themes are explained, illustrated and nuanced.”

In addition to different stages taken in IPA, it should be noted that *coding* is also crucial for qualitative research. Coding process is focused in the current research as to generate meaningful and reliable themes/ meaning units as well as the “essence” of the experience (Moustakas, 1994) with respect to the phenomenological study. However, qualitative researchers might be overwhelmed by voluminous detailed data (Patton, 1980), computer programs can assist qualitative data analysis in a timely manner, presented in table 3.4 by comparing between manual and computerised techniques – Nvivo.

NVivo procedures

Recent qualitative studies have used one of the best and most well-known software packages, NVivo, to facilitate and enhance the efficiency of the interpretation process (see for example, Gummesson, 2003; Harper and Makatouni, 2002). In particular, Harper and Maktouni (2002) examine consumer perceptions towards organic food and animal welfare issues through qualitative inquiry by utilising the NVivo programme to store the data in an orderly and timely manner. However, NVivo is only used to organise the emergent themes, and does not take into account interpretation (Bazeley and Richards, 2000), which still requires that the researcher makes sense of and interprets the interview transcripts.

Table 3.4: Manual versus computerised (Nvivo) techniques of qualitative data “analysis”

	Manual method	NVivo software
Coding technique	Cut-and-paste, note cards, colour code system	Computer program through nodes, consistent coding scheme
Data organisation	Less systematic data storage, keep data/materials in different places	Systematic, well-organised single location storage system
Time and efforts in coding process	Time and efforts required	Timely manner, shorten data coding process
Access of collected data	More time needed	Quick and easy access to materials and codes
Data appropriateness	Small amounts of data, not too lengthy description	Large amounts of detailed data, many interviews/cases, thick descriptive data
Data presentation/report	Visual presentations being created in a separate worksheet	Visual materials being built within the program, using 'concept mapping' feature

Source: see Bazeley (2007); Robson (2002, pp.460-463); Creswell (2007, pp.164-173).

The collected data is firstly transcribed into interview scripts from the audio-recorder, and NVivo is then used to help organise and record significant incidents within the phenomenon analysed. However, the researcher notes that the ideas generated from the scripts need to relate to the current research questions, and data analysis based on a thematic and hermeneutic approach is implemented from the data gathering stage. Selective coding is focused on in this research in order to answer the research questions. After transcribing, the data is coded into themes, categories, and subcategories.

When using the NVivo programme, themes will be deliberately coded, along with the reading of the scripts as "free nodes". Next, these "free nodes" are categorized and subcategorized as "tree nodes" in order to create hierarchical

connections between the nodes (Bazeley, 2007). For example, the different dimensions of self might be put into tree nodes in order to show the various levels of a consumer's self from the interviews. This even allows the data to be arranged into different categories across conceptual groups (Bazeley, 2007).

Lastly, after all free and tree nodes have been reviewed, the abstract ideas are built up to generate the essence and common experiences of the self and ethical consumption. This can then be used to construct an underlying conceptual framework of the phenomenon under study, and may refer back to both self-concept (Grubb et al., 1967) and possession (Belk, 1988). Above all, significant patterns, global themes and associations of the ethical consumption phenomenon are expected to be obtained from the data analysis.

3.4.7 Strategies for ensuring “trustworthy” findings

In qualitative inquiry, studies have been challenged with respect to their validation and reliability by their counterparts in fixed, quantitative research (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). Although some qualitative researchers have used positivist terminology in order to try to make the qualitative approach acceptable in a quantitative world, Ely et al. (1991) indicate that quantitative terms do not seem to incorporate well into qualitative study. It seems that various terms have been used in qualitative study to show “validation” (for example Golden-Biddle and Locke, 1993; Lather, 1993; Angen, 2000; Whitemore et al., 2001; Richardson and St.Peterre, 2005). However, “trustworthiness” and “authenticity” are most often referred to when considering validation, as these terms can capture relevant, important issues (Creswell, 2007).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also argue for the use of alternative terms for claiming the validity of qualitative research. The main focus of qualitative research is to establish and ensure the “trustworthiness” of the data studied, by using terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To make rational sense of these new terms, the concept set forth by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is explained by Creswell (2007, p. 202, 204), as follows:

“To operationalize these new terms, they [Lincoln and Guba] propose techniques such as prolonged engagement in the field and the triangulation of data of sources, methods, and investigators to establish credibility. To make sure that the findings are transferable between the researchers and those being studied, thick description is necessary. Rather than reliability, one seeks dependability that the results will be subject to change and instability. The naturalistic researcher looks for confirmability rather than objectivity in establishing the value of the data. Both dependability and confirmability are established through an auditing of the research process.”

Overall, Lincoln and Guba’s suggestion is intended to move the research more toward naturalistic truth (Creswell, 2007). This standpoint is congruent with this current research, as it attempts to explore the participants’ lived experiences as closely as possible with respect to its nature, to the extent of what it is like, rather than what it should be like.

In practice, to confirm the credibility of this research, data double-checking is conducted from translation to data interpretation. The forward and backward translations are conducted using a bilingual (English-Thai) translator to double-check the use of English (when translating from Thai) and the concept of equivalence (as discussed in section 3.4.4). A pilot study carried out by the researcher identifies potential problems in the actual study when conducting interviews, while assuring that the language used in the initial questions is

understandable, and that there is a flow during the interview process (as discussed in section 3.4.5). Moreover, member-checking is implemented by asking participants to comment on their transcripts, narratives, and on the preliminary interpretations being made. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 314), the member-checking technique is “the most critical technique for establishing credibility”. The participants can either give their comments physically, by telephone or by email. In the current study, all the participants were asked to provide the feedbacks of their transcribed interviews, focusing on the contents and meanings to see if it is what they actually mean.

Regarding transferability, due to its aim to explore lived experiences and relevant contexts, the current research is able to produce a rich and thick description from a first-person point of view (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975; Thompson et al., 1989). This, in turn, enables readers to transfer particular information to other settings, and view shared meanings or characteristics. In order to verify its dependability, the research takes into account data consistency (Clont, 1992; Seale, 1999). To ensure and enhance both dependability and confirmability, all research processes are rechecked with reference to the raw data, notes and comments, and emergent themes, against the emerging conceptual framework. This is to certify that the interpretation and conceptual framework are consistent with what being said by the participants.

Above all, the current research aims to generate trustworthy findings. From the beginning of the research process, samples are carefully and strictly chosen from the targeted population described in the sampling section, in order to ensure the suitability of the participants (the experts) with respect to the subject. Moreover, to produce an accurate interpretation, both audio-recording and note-

taking are employed during the interviews. By doing this, detailed experiences and descriptions can be fully transcribed, which in turn can deliver reliable themes and concepts of real meanings of the phenomenon. In order to explore the real meanings in the study, the researcher did not incorporate a personal (pre-) perception that was not relevant or did not arise from the texts. As a result, the findings regarding the phenomenon studied are trustworthy. In short, the current research project is conducted by following the concerns of an accurate, appropriate and consistent research design.

3.5 Roles of the researcher

Regarding the roles of the researcher in qualitative and flexible research design, the researcher needs to be flexible in adapting to change if an unanticipated incident occurs. However, it should be noted that adaptiveness and rigour should be balanced. As in qualitative and existential phenomenological inquiry, the process of interpretation is the cornerstone of trustworthy findings. Unlike the passive analytical role in the quantitative survey approach, the researcher alerts for all verbal and non-verbal communication during the interviews, until the stage of transcription and data analysis. Therefore, contextualisation of the data starts from the very first moment of the data-gathering process. This implies that the researcher needs to be a good listener in order to hear exactly what the participants are saying. With respect to Robson (2002, p. 169), *good* listening means: “taking in a lot of new information without bias; noting the exact words said; capturing mood and affective components; appreciating context”. Hence, the researcher avoids any biases that could arise, right from the outset of the study. However, it should be noted that, in order to stay in line with the assumptions of existential phenomenology, individuals cannot be separated

from their environment or context (Thompson et al., 1989; Cope, 2005), though this should not be seen as causing bias within the study.

In addition, during the interviews the researcher avoided all leading questions which could cause participants to respond in a particular way. Double- or multiple-barrelled questions (Robson, 2002) were also avoided, as they can convey confused meanings to participants, which may in turn mean that the researcher has gained the information being sought. Furthermore, when encountering a period of silence (Robson, 2002), the researcher probed participants to describe or expand their views. Specific questions such as “Anything more?” or “Could you tell me more about it?” were used in this case.

3.6 Ethics in research

With respect to ethics in the recruitment process, it needs to be considered whether the would-be participants are competent as self-determining individuals (Sture, 2010). This is to ensure that all would-be participants are volunteering to attend the interviews of their own free will. In this research, potential participants are only considered for voluntary participation if they are adults above the age of 18, who can decide and take responsibility for their actions.

The current research also aims to gain informed consent before the actual research is conducted. All potential participants are given information that includes the research topic and the intentions of the study, the duration of the interview, and the fact that their participation should be voluntary, that audio-recording is used, and that confidentiality is respected (see *Appendix B, C*). This information is a way for the research to offer *fully informed consent*, which relates to the appropriateness of the research, the integrity of the data collected,

and the would-be participants – in this case Thai consumers. During the consent process, details of fully informed consent were included in the information on the leaflets during the recruitment process. However, the consent gained was initially assumed when the would-be participants reply and agree to attend an interview for the research being conducted. At the time of the actual designated interviews, consent including opt-in and opt-out options was briefly described at the beginning of each interview, confirmed by audio-recording, and outlined via a letter of fully informed consent, which was given to the participant to sign. In some cases additional data was needed from the participants at a later stage, informed consent were sought again and a consent letter signed at the beginning of the second interview, and confirmed on an audio recorder.

By considering both voluntary participation and consent, all participants had an opportunity to withdraw their consent and participation at any time during the interview, by way of the “opt-out” option. In order to withdraw from the study, they can simply email the researcher with this request, or tell the researcher directly during their interview, in an extreme case.

In this research, confidentiality is strictly considered throughout the study to protect all personal data collected during the interviews. Before consent was obtained, potential participants were informed that any of their personal information will be kept highly confidential, and that access will be limited to the researcher and supporting supervisors. The personal information collected is considered as “privileged information”, in line with the 1998 Data Protection Act (www.dataprotection.gov.uk). Nonetheless, during the interviews, audio-recording was used to record valuable data. It could be said that the participants

may be identified at this stage; however, in order to make the personal data confidential and to avoid compromising the person being interviewed, the personal data identified was kept on memory sticks which are used only for the purpose of data collection and analysis. Furthermore, the memory sticks used to record personal data are kept at the researcher's highly secure location, and a password is required in order to obtain access to the data. After the research publication stage, these memory sticks will be destroyed in a careful and proper manner. Above all, prior the research field work being conducted, this study was gained the "ethics approval" by Research Ethics Committee, from the University of Bradford, as to meet the criteria of ethics for being "no harm" research.

3.7 Conclusion

Upon rejection of Husserl's notion of bracketing and the transcendental ego (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Heidegger 1962), existential phenomenology was considered to be more practical and applicable to this research. The rationale for this is that from the existential phenomenology standpoint, the conscious object is not treated according to too strict an assumption, which could cause it to become completely removed from *being* itself. Therefore, the current research is based on the existential phenomenology paradigm in the qualitative research approach.

Ten in-depth phenomenological interviews were conducted in Thailand, in order to focus on lived experiences with respect to the role of the self-concept in relation to ethical consumption. Thailand has been selected as the research setting, in order that religiosity can be a focus to help when elaborating upon consumer ethics and the moral self. However, as it is rooted in existential phenomenology, the current research is flexible in its research strategy,

especially during the phenomenological interviews. In order to view the *being* in the world and obtain meaningful data that corresponds with the research objectives, an initial set of open-ended questions were prepared. Thus, the interviews used some general, open-ended questions in order to encourage initial responses to open the interaction and to obtain detailed descriptions; however, if when participants strayed too far from the topic, the focused questions were asked.

In this research, data contextualisation is implemented from the time of data collection. The data is analysed based on interpretative phenomenological analysis, with a focus on the inferential process (Spiggle, 1994) and hermeneutic circle (Thompson et al., 1994). Regarding data analysis, the emphasis puts on significant meanings, emergent and global themes, coherent patterns, and an extended conceptual framework to represent multiple realities of the phenomenon studied. Above all, the current research is concerned with ethics. Hence, procedures dealing with fully informed consent and confidentiality are reviewed and emphasised throughout the research process.

Chapter 4

Contextualising internal values in self-ethics relationship:

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings gained from data collection, focusing on self-concept in relation to ethical consumption in the Thai context. The role of self in on ethical consumption is addressed in this chapter. Also there are some emerging meanings of ethical consumption. Dimensions of the self (the actual, the ideal self, and the possible selves) are explored in this context. The findings are gathered from in-depth, phenomenological interviews of ten participants in Thailand, who have experienced in ethical consumption and have placed strong values on religion. Importantly, they all have attached their personal values to ethical issues.

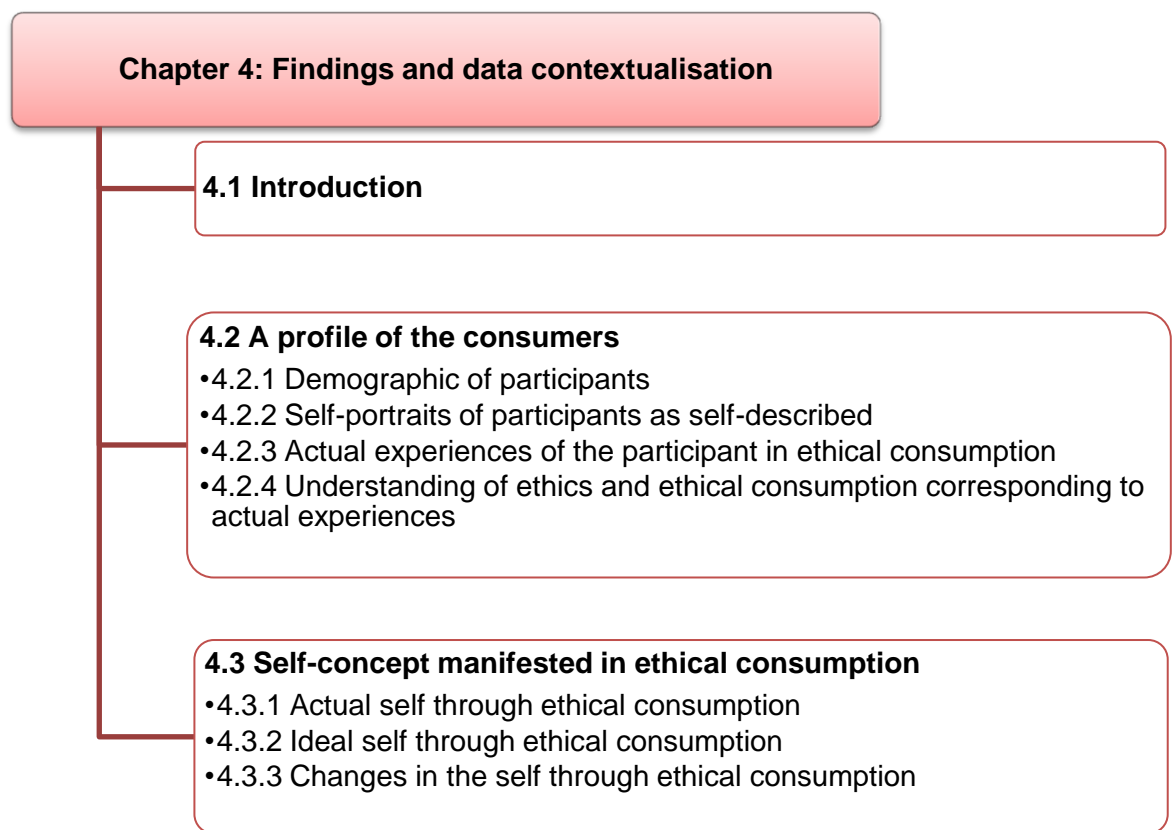
With respect to data contextualisation in chapter 4 and 5, it follows the same analysing pattern. This study adopts an “interpretative phenomenological analysis” (IPA) (Smith et al., 2008; Moustakas, 1994) to contextualise the findings. Briefly, there are four steps to be taken that are: (1) a list of significant statements, (2) formulated meanings of significant statement, (3) clusters of common themes, and (4) exhaustive description (i.e. essence of the experience). It should be noted that the significant statements are firstly developed from the conversation by focusing on how the participants are experiencing in the topic in terms of similarities, differences, echoes, and contradictions derived from the conversation.

This chapter firstly introduces the participants through their personal profiles (in section 4.2), presenting the demographic backgrounds (in section 4.2.1), self-

portraits (in section 4.2.2) and their direct experiences of ethical consumption (in section 4.2.3). To draw out an understanding of ethics and ethical consumption among the participants, shared meanings of ethics and ethical consumption are also presented (in section 4.2.4). Different experiences in ethical consumption among the participants are provided in this chapter, corresponding to how the participants view ethics and ethics in consumption.

As this study focuses on the self-concept being manifested in a context of ethical consumption, it highlights the notion of self-concept in relation to ethical consumption (section 4.3). The dimensions of self, such as the actual self and the ideal self, in relation to ethical consumption are also provided in sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, respectively. Then, section 4.3.3 describes the changes to the self that emerges from the findings. Overall, this chapter consists of different sections following the structure in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: A structure of findings and data contextualisation – Chapter 4



Based on the existential-phenomenological exploration, the findings are contextualised, interpreted and classified to form the overall description of the essence of that phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). The data analysis or data contextualisation in the study is based on the phenomenological tradition, developed by Moustakas (1994). It includes significant statements from the original transcriptions, which are then grouped into “meaning units” or “themes of meanings”, and the formulated meanings are organised into clusters of themes. These clusters refer to themes that have emerged from and have shared meanings with the participants’ descriptions. After a stage of clustering of themes, an exhaustive description of the phenomenon is produced by combining all meanings and descriptions of the subjects studied. This is in order to construct an overall description of the essence of the experience (Moustakas,

1994; Creswell, 1998). As a phenomenological research, the findings therefore emphasise the actual experiences, feelings and attitudes of those studied and are presented as they were heard during the interviews. Thus, data contextualisation lays out all lived experiences of the consumers regarding ethical consumption in this chapter and the chapter 5, rather than drawing theory from the findings in the first place. Later discussion in chapter 6, theories and concepts are then applied to these findings. In addition, the data contextualisation corresponds to the research questions stated in section 1.1.

4.2 A profile of the consumers

Prior to each phenomenological interview exploring the context of ethical consumption experiences, each research participant was asked to describe themselves. In this section, the data obtained through the personal background of each participant provides demographic profiles for all participants. Also, brief self-portraits are used as a means of narrative to display the self, identity and life journey (Schiffrin, 1996). This is to allow the participants to describe who they are through their life stories, personal backgrounds, characteristics, personalities and personal values. Then, consumer experiences of ethical consumption are presented.

4.2.1 Demographics of participants

Although there was no screening process for specific religious beliefs as it is not the focus of this study, most respondents are Buddhist although one is Christian. All of the participants are between the middle and upper-middle socioeconomic classes. Also they have stable lives and careers, in which for most of them product prices do not affect their decisions on ethical

consumption. A brief demographic profile of all the research participants (consumers) is outlined in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Participants' demographics

Name	Gender	Age	Career	Education	Religion	Self-portrait
Krittapak	Female	25	Marketer	Bachelor	Buddhism	Through simple living
Pichaed	Male	48	Government official	Master	Buddhism	Through fairness
Nittaya	Female	49	Social services	Master	Buddhism	Through social concerns
Yingyot	Male	44	Associate dean	Ph.D.	Christianity	Through social concerns
Panya	Male	56	Developer/Expert	Bachelor	Buddhism	Through nature
Ladda	Female	51	Housewife	Bachelor	Buddhism	Through green living
Vaivat	Male	55	Business buyer	Master	Buddhism	Through fairness and animal welfare
Sameujai	Male	43	Government official	Bachelor	Buddhism	Through social concerns and simple living
Umapon	Female	33	Marketer	Master	Buddhism	through fairness and social concerns
Ploynatda	Female	31	Business developer	Master	Buddhism	Through fairness and social concerns

4.2.2 Self-portraits of participants as self-described

As the current research attempts to focus on the self and experiences in ethical consumption, the self-portraits are presented in a thematic form of life stories, self-descriptions and self-expression on ethical issues. After viewing the

concepts of self and the narratives described by the participants, six themes arose out of ten self-portraits: simple living, fairness, social concerns, nature, green living and animal welfare. Also, it is worth noting that simple living, green living, and nature are distinctive in their contexts. The participants with simple living tend to be self-reliant and self-sufficient and they live and consumer moderately. The green living persons are those who have concern about environment and tend to make sustainable choices in life. These persons are more related to ways of living that cares about environment and energy-saving comparing the nature theme. Whereas, the person with “nature” theme is a nature lover, who likes to live closely to nature with an interest of growing trees, using non-chemical substances and consuming organic products. However, each research participant might be related to one or more themes.

Self-portrait through simple living

Krittapak was raised in a middle-class, simple urban family by her single mother. She considers herself a “humble” lady in spite of being surrounded by affluent friends. From growing up with a very simple lifestyle, she is a friendly, relaxed and easy-going person. She has her mother as a role model, who teaches her how to be strong, live with confidence and always have hope in life. In a way these have made her optimistic. For example, when she faces some difficulties in her personal and work life, she never gives up and always looks for the light at the end of the tunnel. However, sometimes if she feels that she cannot handle all the stress and the world is too tough, especially with her relationship issues, religion is her spiritual healer. *Krittapak* admitted that when she broke up with her boyfriend, who she had been with for nearly eight years, she experienced very intense heartache and stress. So she decided to heal

herself by joining a meditation programme twice a month to rest her mind and recharge her energy. She said, "Sometimes you need a place to shut out the distractions and focus only on your mind, sitting quietly and breathing deeply." She finds that simple living helps her to improve her work–life balance and reduce stress, stating, "With my simple lifestyle, I don't need too many things in life, I don't have to be overly competitive, so I don't feel much stress even in a very competitive environment." She prefers to live her life at ease.

Self-portrait through fairness

Pichaed was taught by his parents since he was very young that taking advantage of someone else is wrong. So he grew up with this idea while reminding himself of the rightness. He does not seek to take advantage of other people and also does not let anyone take advantage of him. He considers himself as a good Buddhist in the way in which he follows *Sin Ha* (the Five Precepts of Buddhist teachings) to do good things, including not cheating other people. He was raised in a simple family, with his father working as a teacher and his mother as a shopkeeper. Although now he earns enough money to spend on luxurious things, *Pichaed* still lives his life in a very simple way. He loves to buy food in the market close to his house. The thing that he spends the most on is education, as he was taught to break his boundaries through education.

Self-portrait through social concerns

Nittaya was born in a very poor, large family with nine people living under the same roof in the Chonburi province. However, being poor made her want to learn so that she could not be fooled and could survive in society. She got married to her Thai-Chinese husband, then moved to live with his Chinese

family in Bangkok. She worked very hard for her husband's family business, but she received very low wages. So she decided to move out and brought the husband and children with her. She admitted that at that time she did not have much money, but she needed to do something for her son and daughter and to start a new life. With such limited money, *Nittaya* and her husband decided to live in the Klong Toey slum, where they were able to gain more money than when working for the Chinese family. Even though a "slum" sounds awful to most people, *Nittaya* describes it as a place where poor people live together and help each other: they share food as if they are in a big family, they treat each other's children as their own. This makes the "slum" fascinating for her. Nonetheless, living in the slum she saw many crimes, such as robbery, prostitution and drugs. From this point, she turned her life around to work in social services. She has been helping young people who are drug addicts and prostitutes. Today she is the head of an AIDS/HIV prevention centre and helps the Duang Prateep Foundation to improve the standard of living among poor and uneducated people.

Yingyot *is a 44-year-old associate dean for academic affairs at one of the leading universities in Thailand, and describes himself as a disciplined, organised and easy-going person.* He was raised in a Christian family and went to church every Sunday since he was a child. Now he has his own family with one daughter, living in central Bangkok. He has been working hard for the sake of the whole organisation. He holds the belief "Do your best for today, whatever happens tomorrow, smile and be proud of yourself", which he uses in all aspects of life. He cannot ignore it when a person does something wrong to other people. For instance, when he saw a student smoking in a non-smoking area, he could not stand it; he punished the student with recorded warning. He

saw it as unfair behaviour to others in society. He can be happy only if his actions do not harm anyone.

Self-portrait through nature

Panya, who has converted himself from a banker to head of the royal nature conservation centre (*The Bhumirak Dhamachart Project*), is a 56-year-old, down-to-earth and self-reliant person, who was raised in a middle-class, rural family. He admitted that since getting older he has fallen in love with nature and the charming Thai culture. He always dreams of having a lot of greenery, trees and flowers in today's Thailand, as in the past when he was a child surrounded by beautiful nature. However, there were times when his life was crazy. He worked as a banker for almost 30 years, and during that time he spent his life going to after-work parties and smoking. One day he felt that he wanted to have a more secure life and yet he found that he had ischaemic heart disease (IHD), so that he needs to have a Holter monitor attached to his body at all times. He realised that he needed to change to a healthier lifestyle. Therefore, he started to learn about organic farming and to get seriously involved in the royal nature conservation centre. A supporter of organic farming, he planted organic vegetables at home to use as a real example for people who were having questions about the practice. Since then, he has lived an organic lifestyle, getting closer to nature and having His Majesty the King as a role model for self-sufficient living.

Self-portrait through green living

Ladda is a 51-year-old, kind and economical person, but generous to other people. She grew up in a disciplined family, where she was taught how to be a good person and to be responsible for her own actions. She is now a mother of

three lovely daughters, who she has been teaching in a similar way how to be a good person and how to be a good parent when they have their own children. Being a mother is the most vital role in her life and she wants to be a good example for her daughters in terms of gratitude, kindness and responsibility. Given today's societal change, she is concerned that people are more materialistic and careless. In terms of *Ladda's* personal values, she indicated that 'the changing world is affecting all of us and it is our responsibility to step in and help to rebuild and maintain the beautiful environment so that we don't lose it'. She does not care if she will be only among a small group of people to do this, because at least she is doing what she is supposed to do. Gardening and planting are the two activities that she enjoys most at home with the help of her husband and daughters. She is also concerned about the increasing amount of chemicals in food and the environment, so she uses no chemicals when planting. She claims, "We are an organic family." On some occasions she even follows a vegan diet as a way to clean her body and strictly follow Buddhist teachings.

Self-portrait through fairness and social concerns

Umapon is described as a straightforward, generous and reliable person. At 33, she is mature for her age. She has used *Sin Ha* (the Five Precepts) as a basic guideline in her life. She was brought up in an upper-middle-class urban family, but prefers an easy lifestyle. Religion plays an important role in helping her to deal with people at her workplace and with family issues; for example, when her beloved grandfather passed away. She works in a competitive business environment in which religion helps her to control her temper and not be greedy like other people. She mentioned that there were times at her workplace when

her colleagues agreed to cheat the company for which they are working. She felt very stressed and uncomfortable with these situations, because she values honesty and fairness in whatever she does to other people. After these incidents, Umapon finally decided to resign from her workplace because of the unethical behaviour of people in the organisation. She said, "I might have to be unemployed for several months, but it's worth it not to get myself into terrible and dirty things." Moreover, she likes to make merit; for example, during a severe flood in Thailand in 2011 she and her family saved some money to buy bottles of water to give to people who were suffering as a result of the disaster. In addition, because she is a dog lover, she donates money to a dog charity every month. She believes that everyone, whether human or animal, should have the right to live well. She lives by the motto: "Make today your best day." This is because she holds the belief that "I do my best every walking minute because I never know if there will be a second chance for me to correct it. If I do my best for today, I won't regret it in the future." She is therefore a person who lives life in the present and can get over bad things in the past.

Ploynatda is an ambitious, energetic and fearless but kind-hearted and sympathetic 31-year-old woman, who was raised in a simple urban family by her grandmother and aunt. She is quite a complicated person, having both a hard side and a soft side to her personality. As a sensitive soul, she is greatly moved by art and music, and feels sympathetic when she sees elderly and disabled people. However, at the same time she is a daring person, who loves extreme sports such as Thai boxing, rock climbing and jet skiing. *Ploynatda* is also sincere and honest with herself, so when she does something, it is because she loves doing it. She hates lying and she says what she actually feels. Moreover, she believes that life experience is the best way to learn, apart

from being taught by her grandmother and aunt. Her parents were divorced and separated and then her mother passed away, so since then she has lived with her grandmother and aunt and has been taught to have faith in good things and to be a good and responsible person. She also mentioned that being a good person is her everyday role, including being a good daughter, a good granddaughter, a good life partner, a good employee and a good citizen. Although she might not be good at her studies, she has made her family proud by being a good, caring and hardworking person. She usually goes to the temple with her grandmother every Saturday, so religion has been influential in her actions since she was young.

Self-portrait through fairness and animal welfare

Vaivat is a 55-year-old family man, who describes himself as a tender and trustworthy person. For half his life he worked as an international buyer in the leather industry. He has seen all the production processes, from farming, feeding and slaughter to the finished leather. As a result, he is not able to stand seeing the animals being killed. From this starting point he decided to participate in many campaigns that aim to stop people torturing animals. In his view every life should be treated fairly, both humans and other creatures. In his work life, he has done business faithfully and has never taken advantage of clients. For him, it is important that “money is the means, not the end, but the relationship is the means”.

Self-portrait through social concerns and simple living

Sameujai claims that he is an easy-going, ordinary married man who holds together the different aspects of his life. For example, he is responsible for his whole family, as he looks after his wife and his parents. In the workplace, he is

responsible and does the best he can for the organisation and his team. Although he puts his best effort into his work, he does not set high expectations so that he will not be hurt if things go wrong. He used to be disappointed about not getting promotion, and that was the time he learned that nothing is certain. Since then, he has lived by using the “middle way (path)” to create a balanced life. He admitted that he still wants to live like the old days, when the beautiful Thai culture could be seen on many street corners. Society cannot influence his life, but the changes in society scare him in many ways, such as social aggression, separation and greater crime. He takes religion as a foundation from which to practise a peaceful mind and moderation. In his personal life he is independent and loves to travel (with his wife) to the countryside, where he can escape from his busy urban lifestyle.

4.2.3 Actual experiences of the participants in ethical consumption

As the current research is methodologically based on existential phenomenology, all the participants (consumers) were asked to share their experiences in ethical consumption. Those actual experiences can be grouped into various contexts of ethical consumption: environmental concerns, animal welfare, fairness, sufficiency economy, locally sourced products, charity and copyright. Each ethical consumption context is presented through real stories of the experiences the participants have when consuming ethically. Different experiences of ethical consumption are shown along with their contexts in Table 4.2. Another point that needs to be made is that actual consumer experiences are linked to how the individuals give meaning to ethical consumption.

Table 4.2: Experiences of the participants (consumers) in ethical consumption

Name	Contexts of ethical consumption						Copyrights	Consumption experiences
	Environmental concerns	Animal welfare	Fair organisation	Sufficiency economy	Locally sourced products	Charity		
Krittapak	✓	✓			✓			Organic food, recycled products, local farming products, less meat consumption
Pichaed							✓	Copyrighted CD
Nittaya	✓			✓				Organic food, voluntary simplicity
Yingyot	✓		✓					Organic food, fairtrade products
Panya	✓			✓				Organic food, voluntary simplicity
Ladda	✓	✓		✓		✓		Organic food, less meat consumption, voluntary simplicity, charitable products, vegan
Vaivat	✓	✓						Organic food, energy saving bulbs, no live seafood, no exotic foods
Sameujai		✓		✓	✓	✓		Non-animal testing products, voluntary simplicity, local farming products, OTOP*, charitable products
Umapon	✓	✓	✓					Organic food, non-animal testing cosmetics, fairtrade products
Ploynatda	✓		✓		✓			Organic food, fairtrade products, recycled products, local farming products, locally made (Thai) products, OTOP*

*OTOP – One Tambon One Product: a programme that supports locally made and marketed products from each Thai tambon (subdistrict) (<http://otophailand.com/>).

4.2.4 Understanding of ethics and the ethics of consumption

This section addresses what ethics and ethical consumption are perceived from the participants as to underline the meanings of the subject studied. By asking the participants to explain their understanding of the term “ethics”, the study revealed that all participants use “ethics” to monitor their good behaviours by perceiving that as doing no harm to other people as well as to oneself. Doing no harm is related to good deeds:

“It is about not exploiting others and doing things that do not cause others a problem or doing something that is right, anything like this. It is like not exploiting anyone. That's it. To be ethical, I shouldn't make trouble to anyone or of any kind. It's all about morals in what I do.”

(Krittapak)

“Ethics is beauty in action. It can create a happy, lovely society. It's what I have been taught. Like when I was at school, my teacher taught me to put rubbish in the bin and help others to tidy the classroom. That is good ethics. Unethical behaviour is like driving in the wrong direction.”

(Sameujai)

“I only know that I should do no harm to anyone.” (Vaivat)

“Well, ethics is basically a word that describes action that does no harm to others or causes any irritation to others. There are also different aspects of ethics depending on a person's career, like medical ethics for doctors, who have their own morality to the practices. I normally use morality as a baseline to see whether something is ethical or not, as it

involves both mind and rightness. If we practise good morality, it means that we are not harming anybody and we do only good things.” (Umapon)

Another point that was mentioned in connection with ethics is ‘religion’ (as found from both Buddhism and Christianity). Religion was referred to many times during conversations when the participants were asked about ethics. These are the statements in which the participants identified ethics with religion:

“From what I have been taught, from religious teachings, ethics is more than not hurting anyone [...] it is not hurting others and ourselves through words, actions or thoughts. And the core concept is, you know, not getting other people or myself into trouble.” (Yingyot)

“It’s about my religious beliefs. Religion teaches me that to forgive is way better than to hold a grudge. This is ethics. Religion never teaches something bad, like it’s the place where ethics is claimed.” (Pichaed)

“I’m not so sure, but it’s being a good person. I mean a good person in our society, that’s ethical, and religion guides me in how to do good things. I think ethics has to do with religious doctrine. I won’t be blamed as a bad guy if I follow the doctrine.” (Ladda)

“Every religion, of course, teaches us to be a good person. Ethics is taught by religion.” (Panya)

Furthermore, ethics is defined from the perspective of the inner self. The inner self is related to ethics by being truthful, honest and not even thinking of taking advantage of others:

“It’s the inner voice speaking that leads me to do good things and not bad things.” (Nittaya)

“Ethics is self-honesty, truthfulness and not taking advantage of others, because I believe that some people have a lot of money and they donate it to help society, but that does not mean that the person is a good person, because sometimes the fact that he helped society may lead him to gain benefits from such help. That way for me is not ethics, because the fact that you give things and you expect something in return, that is not ethics, that is called benefits. Or even take the CSR of some large companies, it's not fully called ethics, it's just a way of creating a good corporate image. Therefore, ethics for me is not about giving money and helping other people, ethics for me is being honest to ourselves first; that is truthfulness, like thinking good and doing good, because there are many types of doing good. However, ethics is not about only help and support, because a person might want others to see that they have ethics or they are a good person. It's about not taking and not even thinking about taking advantage of others too, and when something is given nothing must be expected in return. It's like, I do something good for my family and I don't expect anything in return; for example, I love taking care of my grandma and aunt, when I get my monthly income I give them some of my money every month, and I'm happy to take my grandma to the temple and be with her. Another example is the temple that my family and I like to go to and make merit. It is only a small temple, but it is where people bring things from home that they have made themselves to offer to the temple and the monks. For example, how are the poor going to find money to buy things and flowers to offer to the monks? I see it this way, if you grow a marigold at home, then you bring your flower from home to offer to the monks. You do not need to

strive to seek things to make merit. It is like making merit with a pure heart, that is ethics, that I have seen from truthfulness. Because for these people money for food is barely possible, but if they want to make merit, they can do it from their heart, they don't need to beg or do anything that is wrong, like stealing, just to make merit. This is what I mean when I say that we must be truthful and honest with ourselves first, we must not take advantage of others in society. Compare that with rich people who make merit at the same temple, offering a large amount of money to build or renovate the temple, but the money that they use to donate has been obtained from selling drugs: how can this be called ethics, when they actually cause trouble to people in our society, such as drug addicts, and are a danger to society. That's why I mentioned that we must be honest, truthful and not take advantage of others to be referred to as having correct and proud ethics." (Ploynatda)

In addition, the meaning of ethics is drawn from the law. Some participants related ethics to the law, although some of them argued that being lawful cannot fully imply that a person is ethical. So from the standpoint of ethics and the law, ethics can be viewed from different aspects:

"Ethics is like social standards, a good standard. Sometimes the law can't decide on every right or wrong action, but ethics can. Law and ethics need to coexist so that we know what actions ought to be."
(Pichaed)

"I know if I'm ethical, I won't get sued because ethics ensures the right things. But law is not ethics. You don't even need the law to control you if you are a good person. The law is used to control bad people, but not for

ethical people. You'll know yourself what is right or wrong, your moral mind will tell you." (Viavat)

Some participants linked ethics with custom by explaining that each culture has its own ethical rules to which an ethical person is supposed to adhere. To be ethical in one culture or one society might not be ethical in the others. Thus, it is situation oriented if ethics is defined by custom:

"It (ethics) tells me what is good or bad, right or wrong. And it is what people in the society accept. It's passed down from generation to generation, like from my mom to me. I heard this word (ethics) since I was very young. My mom told what is good or bad at home, when I went to school the teacher told me too, and when I met people outside they told me too. I remember I was punished when I used my feet to point things out to my parents and I was told not to do it anymore. But I know in some cultures using feet is OK, it's not rude." (Ladda)

Taking the term "ethics" into the consumption context, ethical consumption is defined differently depending on how a person relates the ethical issues to his or her life and consumption experiences. For example, one participant regards ethical consumption as "eating in the right way to protect our environment" (*Panya*), others consider it as "consuming what you really need to consume; overconsumption even encourages us to be more selfish and greedy" (*Sameujai*) and "I choose Thai brands more often than those imported brands, I buy products from other countries if I can't find those products in Thailand. I feel that we should support our local products to make a better income distribution and help poor people" (*Krittapak*). These understandings of ethical consumption relate to each participant's main ethical concerns and the contexts of their

consumption experiences: organic products, voluntary simplicity and locally sourced products, respectively.

4.3 Self-concept manifested in ethical consumption contexts

In this section, self-concept is explored through ethical consumption contexts (i.e. fair organisation, animal welfare and simple living). According to Rosenberg (1979, p.7), the notion of self that is most often mentioned is defined as “the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings, having reference to himself as an object”. Therefore, in order to describe one's self within the ethical contexts, the study includes conversations about the self explained by the experiences, attitudes and inspirations of ethical consumption. The conversations indicate that religion and self-monitoring also have an impact on the self-concept in relation to ethical consumption contexts. Furthermore, dimensions of the self (e.g. the actual self and the ideal self) are also presented with respect to ethical consumption, which in turn can form the overall self-concept of an individual (section 4.3.1, 4.3.2). Then changes in the self when engaging in ethical consumption are highlighted (section 4.3.3).

Asking participants to describe the self-concept in relation to ethical consumption demonstrates that the self is reflected in consumption decisions through feelings, experiences and attitudes, by which the moral self can be identified. It is found that the moral self underpins one's self when an individual is concerned with ethical issues. For *Umapon* the moral self can be seen in the way that she concerns about people, animals and merit-making. Also, to “put myself in their shoes” reflects her self-concept that has some moral values in it.

“Because when I do anything, I usually think of other people, a kind of *put myself in their shoes*. As I told you, Fairtrade products such as Fairtrade coffee are a kind of merit-making that is to help others while we are having a coffee. I like to make merit. Using non-animal testing products is another way to help them (animals) and not harm them (animals). Personally, I am an animal lover and I can't stand to see those poor innocent animals being mistreated [...] Well, talking about myself, when I decide to buy a car, I will look for something with a hybrid system. I think at least I can find something that helps to reduce the use of petrol, just by half is good enough. Although it cannot fully substitute, at least I can help to save the world's energy and resources.” (Umapon; Fairtrade coffee, non-animal testing products, hybrid car)

For *Panya*, a sense of moral self is developed from his own experiences, for example he sees people die from cancer and how he used to behave. This in turn motivates him to consume healthier and help people in our society. *Panya* did not see himself as a good person in the past, however it seems that his “self” had been changed (in a good way, being more ethically) from the experiences.

“It's “me”. I want to prove that I can be self-reliant [...] I would say that consumption can really tell you who you are, like if you care about your health, you will eat something that makes you healthy, something like organic foods. Personally, I'm interested in non-chemical food and Thai herbs. I have noticed that chemical substances are surplus in our environment and this is serious. People die from cancer, you know, in one year I went to at least four funerals and most of them died because of cancer. I don't want to put those toxins in my body, or give them to my families and all my loved ones. I started to grow organic vegetables and fruit in my backyard, you know, chillies, basil, tomatoes, limes, papayas, mangoes and jackfruit. It's my hobby, a great hobby that means I can get closer to nature. I wonder why I didn't do this long ago. You know, before I was like this, I used to be a party animal, only concerned about myself, like entertaining myself in a bad way. Then my health was getting so

weak that I could hardly breathe. The doctor told me that I have ischaemic heart disease (IHD). I'm not going to blame anyone but myself [...] I always tell people around me that we should use no more chemicals. I show them that organic planting is not that hard, like you just need to spend more time with it, that's it. It's very economical and high in benefits." (Panya; organic food)

Krittapak describes that she is easy and kind person who like to use OTOP, fairtrade and organic goods. With these consumption choices, it makes *Krittapak* feels happy and proud of herself.

"I am an easy, kind of person, as I told you. I like things that are natural and maybe because of that something that is local or homemade style; something that is not overmixed. I sometimes buy international products, but I select Thai products first and foremost. Sometimes I can't find something I want in Thai products, so I buy international products instead. If there are both types available, I choose Thai first because I like to support Thai products. For my simple daily life, I personally like to eat vegetables. I like to eat organic vegetables. I like to buy the vegetables that come from Royal Project shops, because first it's fresher and it comes directly from farms. For me, I'm concerned about these things and it seems like the farmers get a fair income too. Considering this, it seems like the farmers get this income too. If I buy something from like a shopping mall, expenses might get deducted from their income. It's like I'm helping them in a way. Normally, when I choose something that can help others and our society, I feel better, better than when I'm using those other things, like those chemical products or GMO food.' Maybe they are my happiness. Actually they mean a little happiness, when I have consumed the ethical products and I feel very glad and proud of myself." (Krittapak; locally sourced/made products, organic and Fairtrade products)

Ploynatda describes herself as a kind, honest, sincere, non-advantage taking. But the interesting point is that she does not care only benefits gained from the

goods. She looks for a right way to help people, for example, she would not prefer to help beggars, but she likes to help others.

“Me is a kind of person who likes to help others and does not take advantage of others. Being honest with myself, sincerity, not taking advantage of others, good thinking and good behaviour are my main things. These will result in good things just like when I use things made from local organic herbs (OTOP). Well, I don’t just think only I can gain the benefits, but also other people [...] and also the earth. I have a good-quality shampoo, the colour of hair shampoo, it doesn’t use synthetic colour but colour from the natural butterfly pea and there are plenty of beneficial nutrients for nourishing hair. And local producers will get an income, and we can help our community and save the earth in some way. Wherever I see the Fairtrade symbol, whether or not it’s more expensive or cheaper, I will buy it. Whether I’m abroad or in Thailand, I will buy all those things that are Fairtrade and organic. I like them very much. If the packaging is made from recycled material, I like to buy them even more. I feel like I’m taking part in helping our world, the world I live in and the world that belongs to me and everyone. I’m a person who doesn’t like to help people, like beggars or the homeless, by giving them some money. I prefer to help people this way instead. It helps them to earn money from our purchase of their products they made. This is the correct way to help our society and our global friends. It is better than making them become beggars. That is the wrong way to support society [...] the wrong way to support society. When I consume Fairtrade or organic products this way, I’m proud of myself as being one of the ethical people.” (Ploynatda; OTOP, Fairtrade and organic products)

Ploynatda also feels good about herself when doing the right things. She indicates “happiness” and “feel good” in a process of helping others. Her consumption decision does not depend on only product benefits, but also what that consumption brings out to other people and society.

“It (my consumption choice) gives happiness. That is, I can help people, I can choose something good for myself. These are sources of happiness. I can buy or consume goods and can help others, it’s a mankind. Doing this makes me feel good. The things I buy, I can also use. At the same time, I can share good things with other people as well. I want to keep doing things like this over and over. I want to encourage people to make a living in a right way even though it costs me more to buy organic products. These can help many people to have a job, to have clean money, to have a better life, so I am happy. I believe that if we work and earn legally, it makes our life happy.” (Ploynatda; Fairtrade and organic products)

Pichaed also feels good when he buys copyrighted CDs. When he imagines some unethical action (e.g. illegal CDs), he compares himself as stealing thing and not respecting the artist.

“I don’t want to encourage piracy. Take music CDs, for example: I will only buy copyrighted ones, as it’s a way to tell the artists that I like and honour their work. I regard this as intellectual property. It’s the price for their devotion. Buying uncopyrighted music is like I’m stealing not only the music from the artists, but their ideas, not respecting their talents. I feel good when I walk into a music shop, a legal one, and pay for something. I don’t like taking advantage of or hurting people, either directly or indirectly.” (Pichaed; copyrighted music)

In particular, being “self-reliant” and being “self-sufficient” are found to highlight the self when individuals have a simple lifestyle, or as it is called ‘voluntary simplicity’ (Cherrier, 2007):

“Personally, I tried to do the sufficiency economy, but it’s not everything because we still have to go out to buy this or that. But if I have the opportunity, I would do it, feeling satisfied with what I have and trying to be more self-reliant. My home is a garden house. My mom grows chillies and basil, lime and fruits like mangoes and jackfruit without using chemical fertiliser but using bio-fertiliser for a long time. However, she

doesn't grow every vegetable. She grows what she can. It's not that she grows all edible plants like corn or something like that. We have things on hand whenever we need to cook. I just need to buy some materials from the supermarket. We also help in [...] such as energy, at home we turn off things that are unnecessary. For water, we put it in buckets, not down the drain. We don't use plastic water bottles. We have our own filtered water and put it in a jar in the refrigerator. I have been enjoying life this way." (Umapon; simple living)

"I'm not greedy to have this and that, just being self-sufficient. The King's my role model. He's very down to earth and has a great sense of humour. I had the opportunity to meet him once. His concept of the sufficiency economy is like giving me the right direction for how one should live. I feel secure because I balance my life, you know, I don't let technologies and developments overly intervene in my life. Like, I am open to both the new and traditional society. I cannot live without the history of how Thai people in the past created things. I love the beauty of nature and the Thai culture. I would say I'm a dreamer, but it's a good dream, you know, a dream of having back all beautiful nature and happy smiles in our society." (Panya; simple living)

"I think sometimes it (materialism) is too much. Yes, the world has developed and advanced. Things have changed. People's standard of living may become higher and people like to show off their belongings like they want to be someone important. For me, I feel like it is not necessary, sometimes it is too much and I feel bad about it. I feel sorry for people today. Maybe it's just me, I don't know, I just don't want to fall into this trap. I don't want to push myself to work harder, have a less relaxing time. It's not a happy life for me. Because I am what I am, as I've told you I'm simple and I love living a simple and easy lifestyle." (Krittapak; simple living)

"It is simple, I just manage my own life first. Like, I look at my salary and divide it for using and saving. I don't use it for nothing. But my society is quite materialistic, my friends are too. They always have expensive meals and designer bags. Sometimes, I go with them just to socialise

with them. But I don't feel that I need to carry all those expensive and unnecessary things. Some of them are like dying to have them by asking for money from their parents. But I do not want to trouble myself and my parents. I feel satisfied as I am.” (Krittapak)

Furthermore, “being different from others” emerged from the conversations when the participants expressed their feelings towards ethical consumption. *Sameujai* and *Ploynatda* described how they are different from people who are not concerned about any ethical issues:

“Because others may not think about it. For example, some may think that money to buy a wristband can buy them two large meals. But I think that 100 baht can help others and I'm willing to do it.” (Sameujai; charitable products)

“It makes me different that when I have the opportunity to do something and the good results are offered to groups of people, such as buying Fairtrade products, at least I can share my generosity with the others and I actually do it, while others have the same opportunity just like me, but they don't do it. Instead, they choose other nearby brands that are not Fairtrade, even though the products are not different at all. But they still don't choose Fairtrade products. It's maybe because they are a little more expensive. But I have been buying them because I could help people while I can also take goods back home for consumption. Just in this, I'm already different from them. It's about the attitude, the kindness in you. Some people just don't really care about others and the world.” (Ploynada; Fairtrade products)

With regard to the research question, the study aims to address the following question (from the consumer perspectives): what is the essential concept of the self in relation to the contexts of ethical consumption? The significant statements have been developed by focusing on how the participants are

experiencing on the subject studied (as detailed in section 3.4.6), and these are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Significant statements of the concept of self and ethical consumption contexts

Significant statements of one's self in relation to ethical consumption contexts

Voluntary simplicity: simple living

- I used to live in a slum so I've learned not to overspend
- I have been enjoying living this way
- I'm not greedy to have this and that, just being self-sufficient
- I feel secure because I balance my life, I don't let technologies and developments intervene in my life
- I love the beauty of nature and the Thai culture
- I cannot live without the history of what Thai people created in the past
- I feel like it isn't necessary, sometimes it's too much and I feel bad about it. I feel sorry for people today
- I just don't want to fall into this trap
- I don't feel that I need to carry all those expensive and unnecessary things
- I don't want to push myself to work harder, have a less relaxing time. It's not a happy life for me

Fairness: Fairtrade products, animal welfare, locally sourced products, OTOP

- A kind of "put myself in their shoes"
- A kind of merit-making that is to help others while we're having coffee
- I like to make merit
- I can't stand to see those poor innocent animals being mistreated
- I don't wear a fur coat. It's beautiful but I can't stand using it
- It's like I'm helping them in a way
- I feel better, better than when I'm using those other things
- Maybe they are my happiness
- I feel very glad and proud of myself
- I don't think only I can gain the benefits, but also others and the earth
- I like it very much
- I feel like I'm taking part in helping our world
- I prefer to help people this way instead
- I'm proud of myself for being one of the ethical people
- I can help people
- This is happiness
- I like and honour their work
- I feel good when I walk into a music shop, a legal one, and pay for something
- I don't like taking advantage of or hurting people
- It makes me different
- I can share my generosity with others
- Just in this, I'm already different from them
- It's about the attitude, the kindness in you
- I don't feel good about it at all. I don't even want to eat meat
- It's too bad that we feed them and afterwards eat them. I barely eat it

Significant statements of one's self in relation to ethical consumption contexts

Environmental concerns: organic products, recycled products

- I feel pleasure and joyfully eat them
- I am very happy since they are a safer option and good for myself and my family
- My desire is for others to eat them, feel happy and be safe from disease
- I don't want to put those toxins in my body, or give them to my families and all my loved ones
- This thing makes me feel good, that I can help save the world
- So I'm happy
- I feel good about the products
- I feel that I'm not exploiting anyone and our environment that much
- I can help our world
- It makes me feel that I'm helping people
- I'm doing something small but nice

Regarding simple living, the participants are more likely to feel “sufficient” in their lives. Some of them even indicated the feeling of being against materialism and luxury. They prefer to live moderately (e.g. Kantabutra, 2006) and to balance their lives between heritage and new developments. They get used to living and consuming in a simple way. This has made them satisfied without having luxurious things to add to their lives. They do not concern themselves much with social trends, so social pressure cannot affect their consumption patterns and lifestyles.

With respect to a fairness context for ethical consumption, the terms “merit”, “happiness”, “proud of myself”, “help”, “others” and “be different” are repeatedly mentioned and emphasised throughout the conversations. Merit is associated with participants consuming ethically, such as Fairtrade products. To some extent, it implies the influence of religiosity (i.e. Vitell et al., 2009), as in the way that the participants consume as if they are merit-making. In this sense, merit-making has been taught from religion and as the participants perceive this in a

good way and relate this idea to when they consume ethically. It can be seen that religion affects ethical behaviour among the consumers. In addition, ethical consumption can bring them happiness. The feeling of happiness is considered to be a powerful drive to encourage the participants to consume ethically. The intention, in most cases, of consuming ethically is to “help others”. It also yields a positive feeling for oneself, such as the feelings of “proud of myself”, “feel better”, “being different from others”. Moreover, it indicates that the participants in this context are less self-oriented; rather, they are more society oriented.

Lastly, in the ethical context of environmental concerns, “safe” and positive feelings are reported among the participants. Some participants, for example, use organic products because of health benefits, whereas others use them because of social benefits in addition to the health benefits. They feel safer when consuming such an organic product. In addition, the positive feelings, such as experiencing pleasure, or being joyful, good and happy, are felt when they engage in organic (ethical) consumption.

From Table 4.3, the significant sentences highlighted in the different contexts of ethical consumption and one’s self-concept can be contextualised through the formulated meanings in Table 4.4. Some of the crucial individual and shared meanings are as follows.

Table 4.4: Formulated meanings of significant statements: the concept of self and ethical consumption contexts

Voluntary simplicity

- Having been raised in a simple way of life, it encourages a person to have a simple lifestyle
- A person feels satisfied with what he/she has in life
- A person feels satisfied by consuming normal things that serve his/her needs
- Feeling secure is an outcome of having a balanced life and not depending too much on technologies and new developments
- Being fascinated with natural and cultural heritages encourages a person to have a simple life
- Feeling overwhelmed by something encourages a person to have a simple life.
- Instead of pushing oneself to work hard and have an extraordinary life, a person prefers to have ordinary things but a happy life
- Negative feelings towards materialistic people drive a person to simplify his/her consumption

Fairness

- A person shows positive traits, such as kindness and generosity, by engaging in fair consumption
- Whilst being less selfish and less self-centred, a person is more concerned about other people and social benefits through the forms of, for example, having Fairtrade coffee, using non-animal testing products, and paying for copyrighted music
- Positive feelings, such as feeling better, feeling good, feeling happy, proud of myself, I like and I feel good, are highly indicative of fair/ethical consumption
- A 'helping' factor indicates a main reason (i.e. I like to help) and a result (i.e. I can help others) for a person when choosing to consume fairly and ethically
- Being concerned about fairness in consumption makes a person different from others in society
- Unbearable feelings, on the other hand, urge the person to be concerned about fairness in consumption by, for example, consuming less meat, no living food and no fur coat
- 'Merit-making' is a personal inspiration for a person who consumes something fairly and ethically

Environmental concerns

- Positive feelings of, for example, experiencing pleasure, being joyful, happy, good and helpful, are highly indicative of consumption that regards environmental concerns, such as organic vegetables and recycled bottles of water
- Personal and social security is felt by a person when no or fewer chemical substances are added to products
- Guilty feelings, such as exploiting something or giving toxins to someone, drive a person to care more about the environment and consumption
- A 'helping' factor encourages a person to consume an environmentally friendly product
- A person shows sympathy to other people and our world

From Table 4.4, it can be seen that some of the significant formulated meanings of one's self-concept in relation to ethical consumption have common or shared meanings. These meanings can be combined into clusters of themes, shown in Table 4.5. Based on the phenomenological data analysis approach, the clusters represent "themes that have emerged from and are common to all of the subjects' descriptions" (Creswell, 1998, p.281). Regardless of specific ethical consumption contexts for the self, there are common themes that are found in the formulated meanings: positive self, attitude of "helping" others, happiness, moral self and impulse of negative emotions.

Table 4.5: Clusters of common themes of one's self-concept and ethical consumption

1. Positive self	- Experiencing ethical consumption leads the person to have a positive self, including being satisfied in life, being proud of oneself when doing good things, and being different from those who are not concerned about others and society
2. The attitude of 'helping' others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'To help' is found as a key word when the person describes the intention of having ethical consumption - 'Helping' is used as a consequence of ethical concerns when buying something, such as having Fairtrade coffee to help farmers in third-world countries; using organic products to help save the environment
3. Happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Happiness is an outcome of having ethical consumption - The person feels happy and other positive feelings, such as pleasure, joy and being better, which brings happiness when the person is experiencing ethical consumption
4. Moral self	

5. Impulse of negative emotions

- The person shows a lack of greed as he/she enjoys a simple life
 - Being socially concerned and less self-centred shows the kindness and generosity of the person
 - Caring for both personal and social security serves as a reason to choose organic products with no chemical substances
 - To help other people and the world is one way of showing the person's sympathy
 - The person intends to make merit through ethical consumption
-
- Being against people who are materialistic and money oriented makes the person decide to have a simple life
 - Unbearable feelings (i.e. not being able to stand seeing animals being mistreated) drives the person to consume ethically while preventing him/herself from doing harm to others
 - Guilt at exploiting something or someone encourages the person to do good deeds, for example, caring more about the environment and having environmentally friendly products

From the formulated meanings, the exhaustive description of one's self and ethical consumption is then provided to illustrate the essence of the experiences.

Table 4.6: Exhaustive description of one's self-concept within an ethical consumption context

Exhaustive description of one's self-concept within an ethical consumption context
<p>With respect to oneself and ethical consumption, a positive self is shown from the person's experiences. Engaging in ethical consumption in different contexts through voluntary simplicity, fairness and environmental concerns provokes a positive self, including self-satisfaction, being proud and being different from others. Regardless of the contexts of ethical consumption, there is a shared value of oneself to the extent that the person perceives the self positively. Ethical consumption is also conceived as being of a 'helping others' type that allows the person to be able to create a better society. The matter of helping others is treated as both the intention and the result of having ethical consumption. Literally, the inner self of the person is more society oriented and less self-focused. The moral self is found to be a significant underlying value inhabiting one's self, which directs the moral traits of the person, such as a lack of greed, kindness, generosity and sympathy. One's moral self also relates to the intention of merit-making through the way in which the person is willing to help others – as in a form of merit-making. In contrast to a positive self, negative emotions play an influencing role for experiencing ethical consumption. The feeling against bad behaviour and person type, such as materialistic people and animal mistreatment, leads the person to behave and consume ethically. This is to avoid oneself engaging in and following bad perceived examples. The feeling of guilt also influences ethical consumption patterns so that the person behaves conversely in order to make himself feel no guilt. Finally, having ethical consumption brings happiness to oneself. The person who is involved in ethical consumption shows the positive feeling of being glad and pleasure that in turn give him/her a happy life.</p>

From the exhaustive description of one's (overall) self-concept and ethical consumption, interestingly, not only the positive factors (i.e. positive self, happiness, moral self) relate to ethical consumption, but also the negative

emotions that act as an impulse to encourage individuals to make ethical decisions. From the findings, the moral self plays a crucial role as it underpins the individual's moral concerns, which affect the ethical consumption decision. On the other hand, the moral self relates to the moral (self-)identity, which is defined as one's self-concept relating to a set of moral traits, such as honesty, compassion, fairness and generosity (Aquino and Reed, 2002; Reed, 2002). In the study, all participants revealed their moral identity while describing themselves and ethical consumption. Moreover, happiness is stated throughout the conversations as it serves as a happy end point of ethical consumption. In addition to these positive influences, the individuals indicated that negative emotions, such as being against materialism and unbearable feelings when seeing someone get hurt, also relate to their decisions on ethical consumption. From this standpoint, it is linked to the concept of 'avoidance of a negative self-state' (Higgins et al., 1994; Luce, 1998). It is suggested that the notions of disgust and rejection lead the individual to avoid matching their self-concept to the undesired end state.

In addition to the overall self-concept, the study also notices the dimensions of the self-concept: the actual self and the ideal self based on the 'dual self' approach (i.e. Dolich, 1969; Belch, 1978; Sirgy, 1980a) emerging from the conversation. The actual self is claimed to be an individual's basic self-concept that holds the perception of their own image or attributes (Higgins, 1987; Sirgy, 1982b), whereas the ideal self refers to the image or attributes of what one would like oneself to be (Belch, 1978). From the findings, there are some differences in the meanings regarding actual self and ideal self in relation to the ethical consumption context.

4.3.1 Actual self though ethical consumption

The first dimension of the self being explored through ethical consumption is the actual self. In order to gain the essence of the actual self and ethical consumption experiences, this study provides the significant statements, then the formulated meanings, and finally conducts the exhaustive description. The following expressive conversations provide evidence for how the individuals perceive themselves and to what extent that ethical consumption reflects on the actual self:

“I feel that this is my real identity. Considering and caring for others is who I am because I like to help others. Speaking of this, it answers my identity. I don’t think that I make myself better because I have ethical consumption. I think it seems like something from the inside that I already like anything like this. I don’t think that I will use it just to make myself a better person, but it is what I want to do, it’s me.” (Krittapak; local farming products)

“[...] because I am what I am. As I’m this kind of person, I use those products. It doesn’t mean those products change my personality. Well, they are actually the products that serve my needs, such as organic products. Anything that could help reduce global warming, like a fabric bag, would serve my needs. I like things that are worthy, not harming others, I mean not only humans, but also animals and the environment. We all rely on each other and let’s not harm each other. Well, when I notice that I’m this kind of person, the products that suit me are organic products, or anything that helps to reduce global warming. It seems like these products contain more added value and this is what I like about these kinds of products, so I buy them. And I feel good with these products because I can help other people, the environment and our society as well. About the products changing my personality, I don’t think so.” (Umapon; organic products)

"It's because I don't resist. Since buying these kinds of things (Fairtrade products), it will be quite automatic, not just realising suddenly, not being reluctant and unintentional. It serves my needs, like me, I don't have to worry about spending more money to buy these products, because they are good and I'm willing to support the company that produces them. Yeah [...] I pick it up and it will really be good that we may help that person and this person. It's not outstanding to think like that. Like organic products, I feel that they will be good for my family and may be indirectly influenced by advertisements, so I buy them without considering anything else." (Yingyot; Fairtrade products, organic products)

"Of course, it (ethical consumption) says something about me, first, my health; secondly, we stop exploiting animals, I've seen all stages of animal killing in my career in the major food business." (Vaivat; less meat consumption)

"Yes, everything I have done, it's all about my real feelings. I don't touch meat anymore; I eat something else like vegetables, fruits and Textured Vegetable Protein. I am a sympathetic person and don't like to hurt others or see anyone get hurt. Like animal meat, even if we didn't kill them someone did for us to eat them. So, I try my best to avoid animal meat." (Ladda; less meat consumption, vegetarian)

"I am what I am, helping others doesn't change me. I think I'm already good. This is me, the true me." (Sameujai; charitable products)

"It reflects more of the real me. Because things I choose to do or to buy, of course it must come from my own spirit that I know what I like. If I want to do something good, I don't have to care what return or what things I will receive back. But it comes from the fact that I want to act like that. I want to help tea farmers and I want to buy their products." (Ploynatda; Fairtrade tea)

From the conversations, some crucial statements that highlight the actual self and ethical consumption are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Significant statements of actual self regarding ethical consumption

Significant statements: actual self in relation to ethical consumption

- I'm an animal lover. I don't use anything that is tested on animals
- I'm an easy kind of person. I like things that are natural, something that is local or homemade style
- It reflects me
- Being honest, sincere and not taking advantage of others, good thinking and good actions are my main things
- I'm a dreamer, I dream of having back all beautiful nature and happy smiles in our society
- I'm simple and I love living with a simple and easy lifestyle
- I feel satisfied as I am
- This is my real identity
- Caring for others is who I am because I like to help others
- Something from the inner, inside me
- It's what I want to do, it's me
- Because I am what I am
- As I'm this kind of person, I use those products
- It doesn't mean that those products change my personality. They serve my needs
- I like things that are worthy, not harmful to others
- It says something about me
- Everything I've done, it's all about my real feelings
- I'm a sympathetic person and I don't like to hurt others or see anyone get hurt
- I am what I am, helping others doesn't change me
- I think I'm already good. This is me, the true me
- It reflects more of the real me
- It must come from my own spirit that I know what I like
- It comes from the fact that I want to act like that

As highlighted by some significant statements in Table 4.7, this shows that the participants describe their actual self when considering ethical consumption by using these terms: me, as I am, I am what I am, real me and true me. These terms indicate that they are referring to the self and experiences of ethical consumption. Moreover, some of them infer the actual self through feelings (e.g. my real feelings; I feel satisfied) and personal characteristics (e.g. I'm an easy kind of person; I'm simple; I'm an animal lover), while others infer the actual self through personal preferences (e.g. I like things that are natural; I like to help others; It's what I want to do). It is apparent from the findings that revealing the

actual self through ethical consumption is the way to express the individual's morality. In other words, these individuals reflect their moral self in the form of consumption. The key ideas in these significant statements can then be formulated into some valuable meanings in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Formulated meanings of significant statements: actual self and ethical consumption

Meanings of actual self and ethical consumption

- The person claims him/herself positively as honest, sincere, good thinking and sympathetic by choosing ethical consumption
- The person reveals him/herself through personal characteristics when experiencing ethical consumption, such as being an easy person who uses natural and local products, a simple person who has a simple lifestyle, an animal lover who uses non-animal testing products, and a caring person who uses Fairtrade products
- The self is expressed through ethical consumption while highlighting some ethical values (i.e. animal and social concerns; fairly treated workers; locally sourced products)
- The person expresses the actual/real personality through ethical consumption, for example, 'caring for others is who I am because I like to help others'; 'it's what I want to do, it's me'
- The real feelings and preferences of the person are seen through ethical consumption, such as 'being satisfied as I am'; 'I love living with a simple and easy lifestyle'; 'I like things that are worthy, not harmful to others'; 'everything I've done, it's all about my real feelings'
- Having ethical consumption reflects the inner self and spirit that says something about the person's actual self.

The meanings of the actual self in relation to ethical consumption are then grouped into common themes, shown in Table 4.11.

4.3.2 Ideal self through ethical consumption

Apart from the actual self revealed from the interview conversations, the ideal self is also described with regard to ethical consumption. In this section, the significant statements are developed from the interviews before formulating them into meanings and themes and conducting an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study:

“Maybe, but not much or a hundred percent, something like that, but maybe a little. For me, it makes me feel that I'm not exploiting anyone and our environment that much, like at least I can help our world in some ways. So, I could be in a better position compared to others who don't care about this. At least I've started thinking about caring about myself, caring about what I choose to use. When I choose something that can help others and our society, I feel better, better than when I'm using those other things, like those chemical products or GMO food.” (Krittapak; organic products)

“I think everyone wants to be a good person. It makes me feel more relieved. For example, ethically, you don't want to buy stolen goods because it encourages people to do bad things. Of course, it helps to heighten people's ethical level, and mine too.” (Pichaed; piracy)

“Yes, it can, as I am not such a rich person that I can give my money to support others like the good farmers or everyone who is in trouble. I cannot help them much with money in those areas. But I would like to play a small part in the big society that will combine with the other small parts or others in this society and it finally can become a big part. Then, I would like to be one part that can help support the farmers or the quality producers to produce these organic products and further launch them to the market. I would like to help, support and encourage them to survive. As I know, many people actually think that these products are more expensive than general goods in the market. But I would like to be one person who will help support them to be sustained so that there are

people who are producing more organic products and using fewer chemicals. I also want to be a good person in society. I think when I consume it and I also think about other people in the society and our global friends, sometimes it can make me feel that I am helping people or I am doing something small but nice. By doing this every day, each day I am a better person. This is what I want to be and I want to do. I like to do it and I can do it. And many times when I care more about the people around me and the society until it becomes a habit, then it helps me to become a better person. From already good to being even better and better. That is, I don't stop doing goodness.” (Ploynatda; Fairtrade products, organic products)

Table 4.9: Significant statements of the ideal self regarding ethical consumption

Significant statements: ideal self in relation to ethical consumption

- I want to prove that I can be self-reliant
- Now it's like a better me. I care more about myself, families and people in our society
- I try to be more self-reliant
- I could be in a better position compared to others who don't care about this
- I want to be a good person
- It helps to heighten people's ethical level, and mine too
- I would like to be one part that can help support the farmers
- I also want to be a good person in society
- It makes me feel that I'm helping people or I'm doing something small but nice
- By doing this every day, each day I become a better person
- This is what I want to be and want to do
- It makes me become a better person
- From already good to being even better and better

The significant statements presented in Table 4.9 are quite revealing in several ways. First, the terms mostly mentioned to indicate the ideal self in this context are “a better me”, “a better position”, “want to be” and “a better person”. Second, the participants intend to improve themselves to a more desired state. Third, within the context of ethical consumption, most participants attempt to

enhance their ethics and moral self through their ideal self. These significant statements can be combined into crucial meanings as in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Formulated meanings of significant statements: ideal self and ethical consumption

Meanings of ideal self and ethical consumption

- The person tries to enhance or improve the self by consuming more ethically
- The person views having ethical consumption as conveying a better and desired meaning of oneself
- The person perceives the self to be better and different from others who do not consume ethically
- The person believes that having ethical consumption enables the person to be a better person, or to be in a better position than the current position
- The person's ideal self motivates the way the person decides on ethical consumption and ethical products

Then, from the formulated meanings of the actual self and ideal self through ethical consumption highlighted in Tables 4.8 and 4.10, respectively, some common meanings and themes for the actual self and ideal self can be generated separately for this phenomenon. However, it is noted that there are shared meanings of both the actual self and the ideal self in relation to ethical consumption. Hence, the common themes of these two dimensions of the self-concept are also provided in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Clusters of common themes of actual self and ideal self through ethical consumption

Themes: actual self and ethical consumption

Moral self-expression

- The person expresses the actual self relating to moral values through personal attributes, feelings and preferences when having ethical consumption
- The inner self including personal spirit indicates the person's actual self when ethical consumption is experienced
- Ethical consumption allows the person to show his/her moral (actual) self

Self-satisfaction

- The person is satisfied with who he/she is when consuming ethically
- The products (i.e. local farming products, organic products) serve the needs of the person as well as the self-image

Themes: ideal self and ethical consumption

Moral self-enhancement

- The person wants to be a better person, or in a better position his/herself through a form of ethical consumption
- The person shows a better image of the moral self that is also different from other people who do not care about ethical consumption

Common themes: actual self, ideal self and ethical consumption

Self-esteem

- Positive personal attributes of honesty, sincerity, good thinking and sympathy are confidentially inferred as the real self of the person
- The person perceives that being a better person by consuming ethically can enable the person to be in a more desirable state

Moral self-image congruency

- Moral attributes shown in the person correspond to what he/she consumes ethically, for example, the person who is easy-going uses natural and local products; the person who is an animal lover purchases non-animal testing products; and the person who cares about other people uses Fairtrade products
- Ethical consumption is perceived positively and desirably corresponding to the ideal moral self

Once the common themes are created, the study then provides exhaustive descriptions of both the actual self and the ideal self in relation to the ethical consumption context, in Tables 4.12 and 4.13, respectively.

Table 4.12: Exhaustive description of actual self and ethical consumption

Exhaustive description of one's actual self-concept within an ethical consumption context
<p>There is a relationship between one's actual self and ethical consumption decisions. Ethical consumption is perceived by the person as moral self-expression in the way that notions of the actual self focus on moral values and meanings within the self through personal attributes, image, feelings and preferences. Moral beliefs and decisions stem from the inner self, which motivates the person to engage in ethical consumption. The moral self also underpins the actual self regarding ethical consumption. There are connections between one's actual self-concept, product symbolism and ethical consumption. This shows that the person decides on a certain type of product corresponding to his/her actual self-image, for example, an animal lover chooses to use non-animal testing cosmetics, and a simple person enjoys a simple lifestyle by purchasing ordinary products. In addition, the person sees him/herself as an ethical and valuable person when experiencing ethical consumption, which in turn develops self-satisfaction and self-esteem.</p>

As stated in Table 4.12, it is apparent from the exhaustive description of the essential structure of one's actual self and ethical consumption that moral self-expression is evident. The terms "real" and "true" are used to describe the individuals' actual self (Sirgy, 1982a). It also shows that the actual self can be explained in relation to personal moral values, deriving from the inner self. The extent to which the self is expressed through the moral values links the concept of morality to the self (Damon and Hart, 1992). It indicates that there is a strong tendency for a moral belief to be shown in the person if the self-concept is organised around that belief, and it results in a moral life. As the individuals hold moral beliefs in relation to the self, having ethical consumption serves their intention and needs. The feeling of being satisfied with ethical consumption (by using ethical products; i.e. organic products, non-animal testing products) builds on self-satisfaction (Matzler et al., 2005). It also shows that self-satisfaction can be gained by the product responding to their needs and actual self-image. Therefore, there is a relationship between images of ethical consumption/ethical products and oneself. This point relates to the theory of self-congruity, which "links the psychological construct of an individual's self-concept with the symbolic value of goods purchased in the marketplace" (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967, p.22). The study found that the person's actual self is congruent with the image of ethical products. Moreover, having ethical consumption that conveys a positive image to the self and is in line with one's actual self-concept is also relevant to self-esteem (i.e. Sirgy, 1982a; Banister and Hogg, 2004), as the individual wants to maintain self-esteem.

Table 4.13: Exhaustive description of ideal self and ethical consumption

Exhaustive description of one's ideal self-concept within an ethical consumption context
<p>The desired states of being a better me and a better person are a person's key purpose when describing his/her ideal self in relation to ethical consumption. 'Being a better person' is desirable as it conveys a positive image to the person. Then, the desire of being a better person encourages the person to consume ethically. For the person, ethical consumption allows him/herself to enhance his/her moral self. There are connections between one's ideal self, product symbolism and ethical consumption. This shows that the person decides on a certain type of product corresponding to his/her ideal moral self. In addition, achieving the ideal self (i.e. a better person) heightens one's personal values.</p>

Turning now to the essential experiences of the ideal self and ethical consumption, it can be seen that the ideal self of, for example, being a better person and being in a better position is achieved in line with moral self-enhancement. Moral self-enhancement is related to and rooted in Rogers' (1959) theory of individual self-enhancement. Self-enhancement depends on the product used being (positively) a publicly recognised symbol and a match to the individual's self-concept (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). In the context of ethical consumption, ethical products are perceived positively among the participants and they correlate to their self-concept, hence moral self-enhancement can be developed. The findings of this study indicate that one's moral self could be enhanced and even be made different from others' through ethical consumption. It can be seen that both the ideal self (e.g. being a better person) and ethical consumption bring a positive image for consumers. So it is

inevitable that the person is able to enhance the moral self. Furthermore, this links to the theory of self-congruity (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967) to the extent that one's ideal self-image has a similar image to that of the ethical product. The participants stated that ethical consumption can serve their needs of having the "ideal" image, such as being a better person, being more self-reliant and being in a better position. In addition, self-esteem is recognised in the study. The relationship between the ideal self and ethical consumption could heighten the individual's self-esteem, which in turn motivates the individual to make ethical purchasing decisions. This then relates to Sirgy's (1982a) suggestion that self-esteem as one element of the self plays a moderating role in purchasing motivation between one's self-image and the product image. These themes and descriptions about the actual self and the ideals self in relation to the self-concept are discussed in chapter 6 (in sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2).

4.3.3 Changes in the self through ethical consumption

In addition to dimensions of the self in relation to ethical consumption, the study found changes in the self that emerge from the findings. These changes happen to different extents: some participants feel a big change, but others recognise a partial change. The changes emerged from the conversations:

"You know, before I was like this, I used to be a party animal, concerned just about myself, like entertaining myself in a bad way. Then, my health was getting so weak that I could hardly breathe. The doctor told me that I have ischaemic heart disease (IHD). I'm not going to blame anyone but myself. I was living life recklessly. Now it's like a new me. I care about myself, families and people in our society. I always tell people around me that we should use no more chemicals." (Panya; Organic food)

"Well, I do not like to take advantage of others or prefer to do anything like that if I am able to help it. It is my happiness that I prefer. In the past,

I might be young and I did not realise anything. That has changed; I think much more than in the past. (thinking) Umm, what should I say? (laugh) I have changed in a good way. I think more about other people and the environment. I feel in love with this world more (laugh), I have changed and I can realise the environment around me more. On the other hand, I am less selfish because I do things where I do not have to think only about myself.” (Krittapak; organic products)

“I like Thai products and natural products. Then when I found out that the products were from nature or the manufacturers were from the community who want to earn their living, I feel even better when buying these products. It is like I help those people and at the same time get high-quality products. I see changes in myself in that I consider the other people around me more.” (Krittapak; OTOP)

“I'm more concerned about other people, other things around me. For example, having products tested on animals, I feel like actually we can find another way to do it. I feel bad about harming those animals. It's a wrong thing to do, not only for we who are Buddhist, but for everyone, we all should not harm them. We don't really need to test on them, such as those cosmetics.” (Umapon; non-animal testing products)

“[...] it's not complete and it doesn't change much. But I feel more pleasure and safer. It's not really considering that the environment will get better. I don't think too much like that, since it's far from me. I've just thought that it will be safer for me and my loved ones, just that. I and my family now can live our lives happier and healthier. Since we have organic food, I don't have to worry much about those chemicals.” (Yingyot; organic food)

Changes in the self have emerged from the conversation, in which the significant statements can be highlighted in table 4.14. It presents how the self-concept has been changed through the consumption process.

Table 4.14: Significant statements of changes in the self through ethical consumption

Significant statements: changes in oneself and ethical consumption

- In the past, I might have been young and I didn't realise anything. It has changed, I think much more than in the past
- I've changed in a good way
- I think more about other people and the environment
- I feel in love with this world more
- I've changed and I can realise the environment around me more
- I'm less selfish because I do things not only for myself
- I feel even better when buying these products
- I see changes in myself in that I consider other people around me more
- I'm concerned more about other people, other things around me
- It's not complete and it doesn't change me much, but I feel more pleasure and safer
- I live my life happier
- I had lived life recklessly. Now it's like a new me. I care about myself, families and people in our society

As the participants have experienced ethical consumption, they see some changes in themselves, such as being more sympathetic to others. The study notices that it is not only positive changes in the self that are the outcomes of ethical consumption, but also changes in one's character, such as being less selfish. In addition, the feelings of being more secure and happier about life are the consequences of having ethical consumption, which in turn affects the overall self-concept. These significant statements in Table 4.14 can then be formulated into meanings in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15: Formulated meanings of significant statements: changes in the self through ethical consumption

Meanings of changes in oneself and ethical consumption

- The person is more concerned about other people, society and the environment
- The person lives life thoughtfully
- The person feels sympathy for others and the world
- Ethical consumption to some extent helps to change the person to be less selfish
- Consuming ethically makes the person happier as part of the process

Regarding ethical consumption, it can be demonstrated that most participants have recognised some positive changes in themselves, whether that is being more social-oriented, sympathetic and living happier, or even less selfish. It could be implied that some ethical values have blended into the self after having ethical consumption. Ethics is seen more obviously through oneself as the participants practice it routinely.

Then, the formulated meanings of changes in the self can be put into themes that share common meanings, shown in Table 4.16. In the table 4.16, it shows that the self-importance in morals and a heightened moral self are the two common themes for changes in the self through ethical consumption. These also indicate that morality is salient to oneself, in that it influences individuals to decide and behave ethically (Monroe, 2009). After a cluster of common themes are presented, an exhaustive description of the participants' experiences of this phenomenon is provided in Table 4.17.

Table 4.16: Cluster of common themes of changes in the self through ethical consumption

Self-importance of morals (moral salience)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher concerns for others' wellbeing, society and the environment - An interest in helping others (i.e. a fair society, animal life)
Heightening the moral self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feelings of sympathy or empathy towards other people and the world - Being less selfish - Being happier when doing good things

As the study has recognised some changes in the self through ethical consumption presented in the exhaustive description in Table 4.17, the essence of participants' experiences brings to mind several aspects: the self-importance of morals expressed by a higher concern for others and society, and heightening the moral self expressed by sympathy and an altruistic manner. In line with the idea of self-importance of morals, moral salience is suggested as a means of measuring the self-perceived importance of morality to an individual (Monroe, 2009). Monroe (2009) claimed that a sense of moral salience leads an individual to feel that another's suffering is relevant to him- or herself, which could predict moral behaviour. As the moral self (i.e. Blasi, 1984; Aquino and Reed, 2002; Reed, 2004; Stets and Carter, 2011) is enhanced, it relates to moral emotions, such as empathy (Eisenberg, 2000), which play a role in moral decisions and behaviour. Moreover, heightening the moral self can lead one to

behave more ethically by, for example, being less selfish and being happier to help others. This then can link to a concept of moral self-enhancement (Kurpis et al., 2008), which will be discussed in detail in the discussion chapter (chapter 6, in section 6.3.1).

Table 4.17: Exhaustive description of changes in the self through ethical consumption

Exhaustive description of some changes in one's self in relation to ethical consumption
As ethical consumption is experienced, it leads to the outcomes of an increased concern for society and others' wellbeing and an enhanced moral self. Individuals place a (high) value on morality and ethics as important issues in their life, including their consuming decisions. They feel that they want to help others and make things the way they should be, such as fairly treated animals, non-chemical usage and supporting farmers and local products. In addition, morality relates more to the self as the individuals have shown some moral emotions to others and our world and have improved their personality, such as being sympathetic and less selfish. So the moral self is heightened because of having ethical consumption. This in turn makes an individual live happier as he/she is living not only for the sake of him/herself, but also for other people and the society as whole.

4.4 Conclusion

The role of self is apparently related to ethical consumption in the Thai consumer context. Different contexts of ethical consumption are taken into account in order to show the meanings of ethical consumption to the self. The participants in this study are presented themselves through life stories and lived consumption experiences regarding ethical issues, which can be seen as: simple living, fairness, social concerns, nature, green living, and animal welfare. Ethics is perceived accordingly to ethical consumption experiences, such as animal welfare, fair organisation, environmental concerns, and sufficient living.

As focused on the self-concept, it is clear that positive self is an outcome of ethical consumption, in which happiness is often inferred from the conversations. Also, “being satisfied”, “being proud”, and “being different” are examples of the positive self that reflect through the self when the individuals describe about their ethical consumption experiences. The attitude of “helping” others is perceived to be a fundamental concept that motivates the individuals to engage in ethical consumption. Moral self also influences the individuals to consume ethically, by which it shows that when moral self is an important part of the self, people are likely to show, for example, lack of greed, kindness, sympathy, and generosity. On the other hand, negative emotions are seen (e.g. feeling guilty and ashamed) regarding unethical behaviour. This, in turn, motivates the individuals to choose ethical consumption.

Regarding the dimensions of self, it indicates that both the actual self and the ideal are related and influenced by ethical consumption. Experiencing in ethical consumption is considered as moral self-expression and self-satisfaction through the actual self, whereas moral self-enhancement is seen through the

ideal self. With respect to the actual self, the individuals tend to perceive ethical consumption as, for instance, the “real” me or the “true” me. It is the way to express themselves through consumption. In term of the ideal self, the individuals, in most cases, highlight the idea of “better me” in relation to ethical consumption. In fact, both the actual and ideal self are underpinned by the moral self when ethics is central to individuals’ self. Also, higher self-esteem and moral self-image congruence are evident for the actual self and the ideal self when the individuals relate themselves to ethical consumption.

In addition, changes in self are recognised from the participants. It shows that having ethical consumption can help them to enhance a sense of the moral self. Personal development can be gained, such as being less selfish and being happier. Importantly, morality and ethics become a significant part in their lives, by which the individuals place high values in ethics, through the consumption.

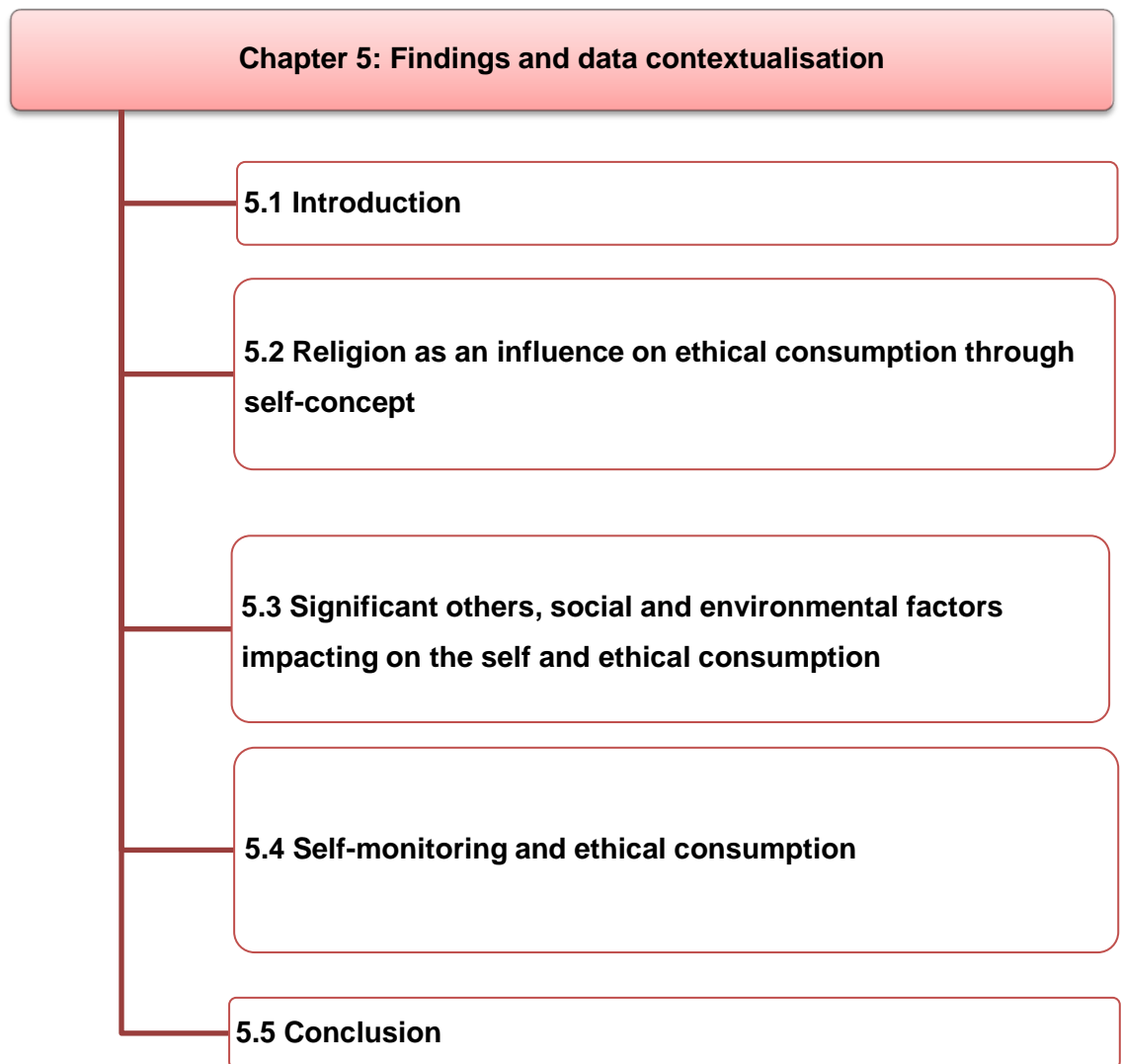
Chapter 5

Contextualising external values in self-ethics relationship:

5.1 Introduction

As this study aims to explore the role of religiosity, social interaction and self-monitoring affecting the self-ethics relationship, this chapter highlights their influences and meanings giving within the Thai consumer context. Also, in this study, the notion of self has not only affected by internal values, external and social values are found to have crucial influences onto the self and patterns of ethical consumption. This chapter provides a closer look at religious value, social influence, and behavioural controlling function of self-monitoring. Thus, the findings focus on religiosity (section 5.2), significant others and social interaction (section 5.3), and self-monitoring (section 5.4). The impact of religion on person ethics, moral self in relation to ethical consumption is highlighted. Then, self-monitoring plays a role of behavioural controlling functioning to the self and ethical consumption; it interacts between one's self and the ethical behaviour. Figure 5.1 provides a structure of this chapter.

Figure 5.1: A structure of findings and data contextualisation – Chapter 5



5.2 Religion as an influence on ethical consumption through self-concept

Religion played an influential role when the participants talked about the self and ethical consumption behaviour. Religious beliefs and teachings are used to guide and inspire the participants to consume ethically. In particular, the findings show that religion affects the participants' decisions in different ethical consumption contexts, for example, less meat consumption, being vegetarian, not wearing fur and using non-animal testing products, not eating living food and buying charitable products.

It is recognised that when the participants discussed about religion, the self is also shaped by religious beliefs and teachings. So religion has an effect on lifestyles and ways of life as well as the concept of self:

“It (religion) helps to guide my life. It’s like when I find something bad or suffering, I know, well, it is suffering. Or when I am happy, I know that it’s happiness. It is going to be a cycle, both suffering and happiness. So, I think I should better solve that problem because it’s wasting time to keep suffering. If I don’t solve it, I will only think, hey, I’m suffering, I keep feeling sad and stressed. It’s not good at all. Religion is the thing that reminds me. However, it also depends on situations. Sometimes, religion teaches me to remain calm but the world outside is moving all the time. There are so many things affecting us. We have to keep up the pace with things. Sometimes we have to fight for life. So, for me, I would rather apply religious teaching to my real life, keep applying it. It depends on principles that my mind learns and then I apply them to my life.” (Umapon)

“I study more about dharma (Buddha’s teachings). Dharma reminds me. Every religion teaches our mind to be pure at best. Even Buddhism tells us to always look at ourselves whether what we’re doing is good or not, don’t be greedy, don’t look with shock, don’t take advantage and if we have enough, we should help others. At my desk, there are dharma book to remind me (*pointing at dharma books on the table*). So, dharma is very important to my life. It reminds me and teaches me. It (the book) teaches about the power of putting effort into things. It says that although we cannot see the coast, we must make an attempt. Everything cannot be accomplished if we only think. We must do it, and this is what I always believe and take it as my motto.” (Panya)

“And I’m holding to this idea and I’m trying to live my life moderately, my way of life is very simple. For the middle path, like a moderate way of living, it is how we balance our life by not making life too extreme. And this is what religion means by *majjhimā paṭipadā* (the moderate practice or the middle path) [...] for me, too many desires and pressures give a

person troubles. Sometimes we need to find the time to let things go, not force ourselves too much, like living with the present, conscious thinking about what we do, and self-sufficiency. All these are in Buddhism.”
(Panya)

Particularly, *Krittapak* even claims that religion is a safe place for her because she does not have a good life, unlike other people. Religion affects the way she thinks and lives her life. Religion also helps *Krittapak* to improve herself in terms of attitude and mind – the inner self.

“Religion is my spiritual anchor. It is the eternal truth that I can use to adapt and adjust in my daily life. I'm not that religious but I live my life with simplicity, not too much off the right track and not that religious. Personally, I have an imperfect life. I've had some family issues since I was a child. So I don't have like a perfect family. I would say this is my weak point, and sometimes I tend to cling to my friends and spend time with them. But still, friends don't have much impact on my attitude. I still want to have my own time to think, to be with myself. And there, it's religion that is the safest place for me, the place that I can trust and it guides me to a good direction. Normally, I do not have much concentration and it's quite easy for me to lose focus when doing things. Also, I am very sensitive and too emotional. Religion helps in teaching me to be stronger in mind and soul. It teaches me how to know myself and know my heart. Once I know, it helps me not to think about those things that will hurt me or make me stressed out. It's like I know the moment I feel angry, sad or happy. If I was born without having religion – that is, I would not have any ethics – I would live my life without thinking. After I've learned and studied the teachings in religion, I tend to think before I do anything.” (Krittapak)

“Speaking of the Buddha's five commandments, if I can eat only vegetarian food, I can complete all of them fully. In reality, I still do not reach that point. Sometimes it is because of the society we live in. However, I use the five commandments as a guideline in life and as part of me. Now, I still eat some meat, but less, and I do not kill or hurt

animals or even talk badly to other people. The good thing is I can adapt and use it in my daily life and things are getting better. If I get angry, I feel that, but am not that furious. It's under my control.” (Krittapak)

Apart from the impact on individuals' lifestyle, *Nittaya* extends the influence of religiosity to life roles, such as being a mother and a social service (i.e. her career). As other cases, positive emotions emerge from the conversation, such as joy and pleasure that religion brings to the self when doing good and moral actions.

“I have respected Buddhism since my ancestors. It is good for cordiality and mothering, creating a good feeling that when I make merit, it brings me joy and pleasure. And it teaches me how to live my life properly and adequately. This is how Buddhism is respected and practised by me in the way of healthcare, family care and even social care. Many people love me because I've brought them out from suffering for the sake of generosity given to them. On Buddhist holy days, we gather together to make merit.” (Nittaya)

Interestingly, *Sameujai* links religion to his subconsciousness. This has brought him to not even have to think before doing good things. Life experiences also influence how religious teachings have imprinted on one's life. It seems that religious belief is a matter that a person needs to develop it from time to time; from the experiences that he or she has been practicing it. As *Ploynatda* also reflects that since she was young, she has learnt about good things and bad things from religion and her grandmother. These religious values have developed within (her) the self.

“Every religion teaches us to be a good person; I am a Buddhist, and Buddhism teaches me to be a good person with a good ethic. I've been living by not doing bad deeds, at my best, and when doing good deeds I feel happy and the sadness then disappears. The teachings of religion

are already in my subconscious and it's up to me to realise it. For me, it has already been deeply buried in my subconscious; I won't do wrong deeds. I don't need to think about it. This comes from my childhood experiences in that I grew up in a house near a temple and used to help to clean up the temple." (Sameujai)

"Like I mentioned, I do not live with my parents. My grandmother has raised me since I was a child. And my grandmother likes to go to the temple to make merit and believes in religion, but not being too religious. She believes in good Karma and bad Karma. She taught that *Karma* (Buddhist belief; "action and the result of action") comes from our action. If I want to have good Karma, then I have to do good things and neither exploit anybody nor harm others. It (religion) stops me to do bad things and make me think before doing something. It teaches me to be good-hearted. By the way, I have to thank my grandmother, who often took me to the temple to listen to the monk's sermon and also taught me to pray before bedtime. My grandmother taught me to practise the five precepts. She told me not to be immoral. In fact, *Sin Ha* (five precepts) have covered everything that one should do to be moral. Now, I am trying to complete all these precepts. But sometimes I still drink alcohol at the party. Sometimes I have to lie to keep everyone happy. I don't want to make my grandmother stressed or worried about anything. So, I choose to tell her things indirectly or, better, avoid it. Or, tell what is called a white lie." (Ploynatda)

In addition, the consequences of doing bad things and opposing religious teachings also influenced the participants' behaviour. For instance, some participants indicated that fear of sin can stop them from hurting others. However, the intention behind the action is another matter that needs to be considered:

"I'm scared of sin too. When I am going to hurt animals, going to hit them, going to kill them or accidentally bump into them, I feel, hey, it's a sin and I shouldn't do it. But, I have to see how serious that sin is. It's like when we lie, or when we lie about a little thing, sometimes I do. But if it's

a big lie, I don't do it. Something like white lies and black lies, something like that. I know it doesn't matter what we lie about, it's wrong in the sense of religion. But I am not scared of sin if I tell a white lie. I feel OK if the sin I commit doesn't harm anyone. It's about the intention too, like if it's done with good intentions, it's still OK for me." (Umapon)

"Me, I do believe in what goes around comes around. I don't place much importance on the results of sin in the future but on a sin done in the present, because karma is the result of our actions." (Pichaed)

The following are the conversations that highlight actual experiences in relation to one's self and ethical consumption as affected by religion. With regard to Buddhist teachings, for example, the middle path is found to be highly related to the ethical consumption context among Thai consumers. It guides the participants to have a simple life and to be willing to live and consume things moderately. This links to the voluntary simplicity context (i.e. Cherrier, 2005, 2007). Moreover, some participants decided to consume less meat or become a vegetarian in order to avoid committing a sin by harming and exploiting animals:

"I follow the concept of His Majesty. He focuses on development while preserving the Thai traditions and culture and he uses dharma to help to do this, which is the moderation or middle path. And I'm holding to this idea and I'm trying to live my life moderately; my way of living is very simple. I don't spend on things that are unnecessary. For the middle path, like a moderate way of living, it is how we balance our life by not making life too extreme. And this is what religion means by *majjhima paṭipadā* (the moderate practice or the middle path) [...] Me, I don't have any thought of using designer brands or luxury cars. I find it such a wasteful thing to do. I've lived a chilled life, not being so competitive to have a lot of money and a luxurious life. I just feel no need for that. I think I'm a happy person living on earth by just having a simple life. This is how I interpret religion and use it in my life, it has taught me to feel satisfied and happy with a simple lifestyle. For me, too much desire and

pressure would give a person troubles. Sometimes we need to find the time to let things go; don't force ourselves too much, like living with the present, consciously thinking about what we do, and self-sufficiency. All these are in Buddhism.” (Panya; voluntary simplicity)

“Self-reliance is also taught in dharma, which is that one should rely on oneself [...] I could hold on to this concept of His Majesty, not only in consumption but also living my life, I hold on to the middle path. For the middle path to eating, I look at healthy and natural food. I want to be self-reliant as much as possible and want to help our world that it is now getting worse by us, people. So, I grow vegetables myself for food and don't use any chemicals. It helps reduce the toxic and adulterated things that occur in the natural environment.’ (Panya; organic food)

“At first I wanted to try to stop having meat. It's because I wanted to practise my mind and detox my body. I remember the first time I had only vegetables all day was during a Chinese vegetarian festival that lasted 9 days in late September. But I continued to eat vegetarian food for nearly 2 months. Not only I can make merit from not eating meat, but my health is also getting better, for example I don't have any stomach upset, no discomfort after having meals, and my skin looks better [...] As I told you, I have vegetarian food and have only vegetables on Buddhist holy days. This is because I want to stop eating meat at a certain time and not exploit animals. At most only once a week I can do that. Also, I don't use those products that kill a lot of animals in the production process, something like that. I do not wear a fur coat. It's beautiful but I can't stand using it. I look for a replacement product. I bought other clothes, a faux fur coat for example, it also keeps me warm and looks fashionable, I mean when I go abroad. So, any product that is harmful to life, I don't use it because it's a sin. And this is because of some influence of religion. They (animals) were not born to stand for something like this. But if it's a chicken or a pig, they were born to be food for humans anyway. I feel OK to eat it.” (Umapon; less meat consumption, vegetarian, no fur clothes)

“For consumption, some people hurt animals and it is sinful. I don’t feel good about it at all. I don’t even want to eat meat. I’ve tried to eat less meat. People without religion, I see them like they’re quite rough and may not care much about others, not a soft-hearted person. But I can’t avoid eating meat for good, because I still need some protein from meat. Anyway, I don’t eat some meat, such as beef, lamb and exotic meats like kangaroo, rabbit and pigeon. And I don’t like pork, so I usually eat fish. It is not about being on a diet, but I just get sick of meat. Really, it’s up to my mood, like on some days I just have only eggs and vegetables [...] religion plays a role in this. It has a great impact on my eating habits. For example, a cow is a big animal. If I want to eat it, then they have to kill it. Me, what I do every year is I donate some money for the temple to keep the life of a cow. Me and my family, we save some money and make merit on special occasions, like on the King’s birthday and my birthday. Sometimes we donate the money to save animals’ lives and help them to go back and live in the forest, the way it should be.” (Krittapak; less meat consumption, vegetarian)

“I think animals have their lives, the same as ours. It is sinful. So I don’t buy fish in the fish tank. And animals that people eat for longevity, I don’t eat them because it’s a sin. Like, the Chinese, they like to eat dogs and cats, it’s also a sin and it’s too bad that we feed them and afterwards eat them. When I was a kid, I remember my Chinese-Thai grandparents killed ducks and chickens in the backyard to offer to the gods. I barely ate them. I felt awful.” (Ladda; no living food)

“Like my previous example of the 100 Baht picture frame, some part of the money goes to help people and some people didn’t realise this. Religion has a great part in this decision, because I know that the money will go to the kids’ education and as in Buddhism’s saying of *Do good, get good; do bad, get bad*, that has taught me to be a good person.” (Sameujai; charitable products)

“Ethics in my opinion that I have already told you in the beginning is about being self-honest, sincere, not taking advantage and making a return to society. All these are included in the five precepts that all

Buddhists already know, which is not to steal, not to lie and not to take advantage of other lives. For example, when I want to buy cosmetics, I will check if the one I want to buy is not tested on animals. If yes, I will buy it straightaway. However, it must be something that I like to have and also I must not be allergic to it. Then, I want to buy it. But if it's a kind like [...] Once, my friend recommended to me that her facial cream of a certain brand was nice and she told me to give it a try. But I didn't buy it, because this brand uses animals to test its products. It's because I'm a person who will not use nice stuff that comes from taking advantage of those animals in the lab, if I know it, if I have that information. This is because I have *Sin Ha* (five precepts) in my mind. That's why I don't like to take the advantage of any other lives. If I can avoid it, I will do it. In fact, it's not just the basis of the five precepts. When we take the advantage of anything or anyone, it's already something wrong. So, it shouldn't be done. It's not only because I am Buddhist and my grandmother taught me not to kill animals or lives or not to take advantage of anyone. Me, I see all these as evil and immoral things. I don't even need to think about it. Why I have to buy things that use animals, their lives, just for a jar of cream.” (Ploynatda; non-animal testing products)

Some participants indicated that although religion has an effect on their life and how they decide to consume ethically, their inner voice or moral sense is also part of their ethical decisions. Also, the context of religion is to some extent relevant in the way the participant perceives ethics and decides on ethical consumption. Yingyot, for example, addressed the fact that because of Christian teachings he believes that killing animals to eat is acceptable as it does not violate the teachings in the Bible:

“It is what's deep inside me tells me to do. I might have been shaped by religion, but above all it's me choosing what to care about. Me, I don't like to take advantage of other people.” (Pichaed; fairness and copyrighted CDs)

“Christianity is not too concerned with animals since we believe that animals can be eaten and killed for consumption. It's not like Buddhism in which animals are more important. Christianity believes that God creates humans to be bigger than animals, therefore humans can kill animals. However, they can't be killed for play, but they are edible. For me, I think that humans and animals are a little bit different in class, but humans and humans are a bigger issue. I don't think that religion influences the consumption of meat, since Christianity didn't mention that issue, making me feel nothing when selecting meat for consumption. For example, if you want me to have vegetarian foods, I don't feel that eating them will gain me virtue or it is the right thing that should be done. I don't think much like that. For me, I disagree with the way they test on animals for making cosmetics or something like that. I use my facial wash that was not tested on animals. I feel it is unfair for them just for that purpose.”
(Yingyot)

As it is found that the self can be shaped by religion, the analysis first involves one's self-concept in relation to religion. Then the findings are contextualised through ethical consumption experiences to show how religion influences the self as well as ethical consumption. In order to obtain the meanings of religiosity in this phenomenon, significant statements, formulated meanings, crucial themes and an exhaustive description need to be produced.

Table 5.1: Significant statements: religion and self-concept

Significant statements: religion and one's self-concept

- It (religion) helps to guide my life
- Religion is the thing that reminds me. However, it also depends on situations
- ... for me I would rather apply religious teaching to my real life, keep applying it
- Dharma reminds me
- It reminds me and teaches me
- It (religion) says that although we cannot see the coast, we must make an attempt. Everything cannot be accomplished if we only think. We must do it, and this is what I always believe and take as my motto
- Religion is my spiritual anchor
- It is the eternal truth that I can use to adapt and adjust in daily life. I'm not that religious but I live my life with simplicity, not too much off the right track and not that religious
- And there, it's religion that is the safest place for me, the place that I can trust and it guides me in a good direction
- Religion helps in teaching me to be stronger in mind and soul
- It teaches me how to know myself and know my heart
- If I was born without having religion; that is, I would not have any ethics, I would live my life without thinking
- I take the five commandments as the guideline in life and as part of me
- If I get angry, I feel that but am not that furious. It's under my control
- It (religion) is good for cordiality and mothering, creating a good feeling so that when I make merit, it brings me joy and pleasure
- It teaches me how to live my life properly and adequately
- Buddhism is being respected and practised by me in the way of healthcare, family care and even social care
- Every religion teaches us to be a good person; I am a Buddhist, and Buddhism teaches me to be a good person with good ethics, and it is what I want to be. I've been living by not doing bad deeds, at my best, and when doing good deeds I feel happy and the sadness then disappears
- For me, it has already been deeply buried in my subconscious; I won't do wrong deeds. This comes from my childhood experiences that I've grown up in a house near a temple and used to help to clean up the temple
- If I like to have good Karma, then I have to do good things and neither exploit anybody, nor harm others. It (religion) stops me so that I think before doing something
- It teaches me to be good-hearted
- In fact, *Sin Ha* (five precepts) have covered everything that one should do to be moral. Now, I am trying to complete all these precepts
- I am scared of sin too. When I am going to hurt animals, going to hit them, going to kill them or accidentally bump into them, I feel, hey, it's a sin and I shouldn't do it
- I have to see how serious that sin is
- It's about the intention too, like if it's done with a good intention, it's still OK for me
- I don't place much importance on the result of sin in the future but on a sin committed in the present, because karma is the result of an action

Table 5.1 illustrates the important relationship between religion and oneself that underlies morality within a person. As very often mentioned in the conversations, religion plays a role in life guidance and moral reminders. Some participants even related religious teaching (e.g. dharma and bible) to their personal motto affecting the self and the behaviour. Furthermore, “sin” and “good karma” are described along with the reason for behaving ethically, such as not hurting animals and not telling (black) lies. However, the participants argued that as they could not behave completely in line with religious teachings, the intentions of certain behaviour are also important and need to be considered in terms of whether they are sinful or not, such as black lies and white lies. The participants do not utilise religious teachings (e.g. dharma and bible) in their pure sense, but rather apply them to themselves and live in the most practical way. Additionally, it seems that religion has an impact on different aspects of the self, such as the moral self, the actual self, the ideal self. This in turn encourages ethical behaviour within the context of ethical consumption. For example, some religious value has imprinted the ways in which *Panya* has decided to consume things moderately and simply; *Sameujai* purchases charitable products; *Ladda* never buys fish directly from the tank; *Krittapak* has tried to consume less meat; and *Ploynatda* has used non-animal testing cosmetics.

The further specific focus placed on religion and the self in relation to the ethical consumption context is shown in Table 5.2. Various significant statements highlight one’s self and religiosity as the decision is made to engage in ethical consumption. Different contexts of ethical consumption are used as a means to demonstrate some actual experiences of consumption.

Table 5.2: Significant statements: religion and self-concept within the contexts of ethical consumption

Significant statements: religion and one's self-concept in the ethical consumption context

- I'm holding to this idea (middle path) and I'm trying to live my life moderately, my way of living is very simple. I don't spend on things that are unnecessary (*Voluntary simplicity*)
- I think I'm a happy person living on earth by just having a simple life. This is how I interpret religion and use it in my life, it has taught me to be satisfied and happy with a simple lifestyle (*Voluntary simplicity*)
- Self-reliance is also taught in dharma ... I want to be self-reliant ... so I grow vegetables myself for food and don't use any chemicals (*Voluntary simplicity and organic products*)
- As I told you, I have vegetarian food and have only vegetables on Buddhist holy days. This is because I want to stop eating meat at a certain time and not exploit animals (*No or less meat consumption*)
- ... if any product is harmful to life, I don't use it because it's a sin (*Non-animal testing products*)
- For consumption, some people hurt animals and it is sinful. I don't feel good about it at all. I don't even want to eat meat. I've tried to eat less meat. People without religion, I see them like they're quite rough and may not care much about others, not a soft-hearted person (*Less meat consumption*)
- It (religion) has a great impact on my eating habits (*Vegetarian*)
- Sometimes we (I and my family) donate the money to save animals' lives and help them to go back and live in the forest, the way it should be
- It is sinful. So I don't buy fish in the fish tank (*No live food*)
- And animals that people eat for longevity, I don't eat them because it's a sin (*No exotic food*)
- Religion has a great role in this decision because I know that the money will go to the kids' education and as in Buddhism's saying of "Do good, get good; do bad, get bad" that has taught me to be a good person (*Charitable products*)
- This is because I have *Sin Ha* (five precepts) in my mind. That's why I don't like to take advantage of any other lives (*Non-animal testing products*)
- It's not only because I am Buddhist and my grandmother taught me not to kill animals or lives or not to take advantage of anyone. Me, I see all these as evil and immoral things
- It is what's deep inside me tells me to do. I might have been shaped by religion, but above all it's me choosing what to care about.
- Christianity believes that God creates humans to be bigger than animals, therefore humans can kill animals. Christianity didn't mention that issue, making me feel nothing when selecting meat for consumption (*Meat consumption*)

The statements in Table 5.2 report that there is a strong relationship between religion and the self when considering ethical consumption. However, some participants pointed out that religion might not be the only influential factor on ethical consumption experiences; rather, they indicated that they, themselves, are also a part of the decision, such as through a sense of morality and attitude. Within the ethical consumption phenomenon, another element of the self affected by religion is emotions. It is stated that having ethical consumption, that is, voluntary simplicity, could make the person feel happy and satisfied in life.

As expected, it can be seen that religion is considered as a powerful influence on a person's moral self among the participants as well as ways of consumption. With respect to the contexts of ethical consumption through the self, for instance, one participant described that she would rather not purchase some fish directly from the tank, another commented that on Buddhist holy days she would have no meat. Nevertheless, in some cases, such as Christianity, consuming meat is acceptable as it has not been emphasised in Bible teaching. Regardless of its contexts, all participants expressed their religious beliefs and religious teachings through ethical consumption. Also, when the participants were asked the question on self and religion in relation to ethical consumption, the answers reveal that having religion in mind could lead you to be a good person, that is, by making donations; on the other hand, being without religion could make a person rough.

From these significant points made on religion and the self in Table 5.1 and religion and the self within the ethical consumption contexts in Table 5.2, the formulated meanings can be drawn out, shown in Tables 5.3 and 5.4, respectively.

Table 5.3: Formulated meanings of significant statements: religion and self-

Meanings of religion in relation to one's self-concept

- Religion teaches and influences the person to be a good person or a good-hearted person with ethics, resulting in, for example, doing good deeds, doing no harm to others and not hurting animals
- As stated, religion is used as guidance for life, in which the person even takes some religious teachings as a personal motto, affecting decision-making and actions
- Five commandments or five precepts (*Sin Ha*), as Buddhist religious teaching, is used to guide the person's life relating to ways of living as well as being a part of the self
- Having religion in life has taught and brought the person to know him/herself better
- Trying to be a good person as taught by religion inspires the person to behave morally
- Religion including dharma helps remind the person to do moral and right things
- Religion has been brought to real life and has been applied to the ways the person lives life, having a proper and sufficient life; being on the right track; being concerned about healthcare; mothering children and taking care of family; and being involved in social care
- Religion is seen as 'the person's spiritual anchor' and even being a safe and trusted place that can lead the person in a good direction when feeling lost and insecure in life
- The person's mind and religion are related as it can make for a stronger mind and the person is able to take control over his/her anger
- 'Thinking before doing', as an outcome of religion, has caused the person to do good things and have good karma (action)
- Being happy, joyful and pleasant are the results of merit-making and doing good deeds with respect to religion and its teachings
- As the person is scared of sin, this in turn prevents the person from doing bad things
- The intention and consequence of the action are taken into account when the person perceives whether behaviour is sinful or not, affecting the person's ethical decisions in certain situations
- Religion has been bought into the subconscious of the person, together with religious upbringing and environment, which has an impact on ethical behaviour, i.e. not doing wrong deeds

Table 5.4: Formulated meanings of significant statements: religion and self-concept within the ethical consumption contexts

Meanings of religion and one's self within the ethical consumption contexts

- The "middle path" from one of the Buddhist principles is a key idea that the person attaches to the self regarding the way of moderate and simple consumption
- The person perceives the self as "a happy person" from having a simple life, in which the feeling of being satisfied can also be gained
- Trying to be "self-reliant" leads the person to consume independently by growing vegetables using no chemicals at home
- Because of religious beliefs and activity, i.e. belief in sin and Buddhist holy days, the person feels the need to avoid meat consumption or to eat less meat
- As the person perceives killing or hurting animals is sinful, the person avoids that behaviour in the form of consumption
- Without religion, one's self is perceived as a rough person and not caring for others by, for example, consuming meat
- Feeling bad makes the person avoid doing bad deeds by not eating meat or eating less meat
- The idea of being a good person derived from religious teaching drives the person to use things that enable him/herself to make a difference in others' lives by buying charitable goods
- Religion or religious teaching (dharma) that is imprinted onto the self and the person's mind tells the person to engage in ethical behaviour and ethical consumption
- Decision on ethical consumption is directed by the self together with religious teachings, reflecting the person values ethics as the way the person consumes ethically.
- Decisions on ethical consumption are directed to the self, telling the person to consume ethically regarding religious teachings
- It is the underlying religious beliefs (from Christianity) that make the person feel nothing when killing animals for consumption

After laying out the formulated meanings of religion in relation to one's self-concept and within the contexts of ethical consumption, these meanings are then arranged into clusters of themes that emerge from the findings, presented in Tables 5.5 and 5.6.

Table 5.5: Clusters of common themes of religion and one's self

Guidance and reminders to the self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teaches the person to be a good person - As a motto for the person to follow in life - Guides the concept of self and ways of living - Reminders of morality and ethics to the person
Sense of self connected to religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religion is a part of one's self - Allows the person to know his/her self better - Wanting to be a good person with regard to the teaching of religion would encourage moral behaviour - Emotional involvement leads to moral actions that are related to religion - Binds to the person's subconscious, resulting in ethical behaviour
Ways of living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To have a proper and sufficient life - Balancing life - Involved in healthcare, mothering, family care and social care
Spiritual refuge	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As the person's 'spiritual anchor' - Being a secure and trusted place for the person - Strengthening the mind by religious practice
Thoughtful self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tends to think more before taking action - Conscious thinking
Feeling scared of sin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To avoid being sinful results in ethical decisions - The person's intention and consequences are relevant to the person perceiving right and wrong actions

Table 5.6: Clusters of common themes: religion and one's self within the ethical consumption contexts

Self-sufficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The middle path from Buddhist teaching is attached to the self through voluntary simplicity
Self-reliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The desire of being self-reliant drives the person to consume things moderately and independently
Moral self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The person perceives him/herself as a happy person and feels satisfied with simplicity - Sin is undesirable and causes the person to consume ethically
Moral identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Without religion, the person is seen as rough and careless by consuming meat or exploiting animals - Being a good person (based on religious teaching) urges the person towards ethical decisions and behaviour

Inner self

- Negative emotion towards unethical behaviour encourages the person to consume
- Religious belief integrated to the inner self causes ethical consumption more instinctively
- As imprinted by religion, the self directs the person to behave and consume ethically

After different themes highlighted in table 5.5 and 5.6 point out the individuals' experiences of religion and ethical consumption through the self-concept; and the context of those experiences, the study then can produce the exhaustive descriptions of the phenomenon, regarding religion in relation to the self-concept and religion through the self-concept within a context of ethical consumption. These descriptions show the meaning and essential structure of this phenomenon, which are presented in table 5.7 and 5.8.

Table 5.7: Exhaustive description of religion and one's self-concept

Exhaustive description of one's self in relation to religion
<p>Religion is seen as one's moral source, which influences moral values within the self by guiding an ethical way of living. Some people have adopted religious teachings as a personal motto, while others take them as a spiritual refuge. When one has an unstable state of mind or life problem, religion is a trusted place to make one feel better, secure and safe. It can bring one to have a stronger mind. In terms of the person's thinking process, religion shapes the way of thinking to think consciously before taking action, which in turn results in a more thoughtful self. Further specific details of religion, especially in the Thai context, are that religion has a strong impact on the extent to which the person has a sufficient life, related to the concept of the middle path from Buddhist teaching. Religion also has an effect on how the person, for example, looks after his/her family, balances his/her life and engages in social services. As for focusing on the self, religion is claimed to be a part of one's self and even binds to one's subconscious. Thereby, it positively affects the self when making ethical decisions and behaving ethically. Moreover, as religious belief has developed within the self, being a good-hearted person is desirable together with happiness, joy and pleasure, which even motivate the person to ethical behaviour. On the other hand, negative influences such as being scared of sin also make the person feel bad and want to avoid unethical actions.</p>

Table 5.8: Exhaustive description of religion and one's self-concept within an ethical consumption context

In the context of ethical consumption, religion and its teachings play an influential role in the self in how the person perceives ethics and responds to it through ethical consumption. Regarding *Sin Ha* (five precepts) of Buddhist teaching (dharma), consuming meat or killing animals is seen as sin, which causes an undesirable feeling when having meat, resulting in less meat consumption or being vegetarian. Relating to the self, the moral self is shaped by some religious values as in the way the person feels happy and satisfied when living life through the 'middle path' or moderation taught in Buddhism. As a result, being self-reliant and being self-sufficient are desirable, which makes the person engage in voluntary simplicity, such as not overconsuming and growing some vegetables at home for consumption. Interestingly, the conversations described how people without religion are considered as rough, not caring about others and tending to be involved in unethical behaviour, such as animal exploitation and meat consumption. In contrast to this, as people are taught by religion to do good deeds, being a kind of good or moral person encourages oneself to decide and behave ethically, for example, when the person purchases a charitable product or donates some money to help children's education. Further exploring a concept of self, to some extent religion is integrated into one's inner self, which encourages ethical consumption to happen quite instinctively. In addition, not only positive emotion within oneself can drive ethical consumption, as a negative response, such as feeling bad about killing animals, can also lead to consuming ethically when the person attempts to avoid bad deeds and sin.

From the exhaustive description in table 5.7 and 5.8, it can be seen that there are some elements that are related to construct the phenomenon of ethical consumption and the self with respect to religion. When describing religion to the self, the participants claimed that “as a guideline in life and as part of me”, “creating a good feeling that when I make merit, it brings me joy and pleasure”, “deeply buried in my subconscious; I won't do wrong deeds”, “I don't eat it because it's a sin. [...] I barely ate them, I feel awful”, in which it is closely related to the notion of morality to the self (Damon and Hart, 1992) or, in short, moral self. Furthermore, moral self that is underpinned by religion is also related to one's inner self through subconscious. This causes the individual to instinctively consume ethically.

In the Thai context, it also found that with the influence of religion, one's inner self and moral self integrating into the overall self. As religion is stated that “it teaches me to be good-hearted”; and “it teaches me to be a good person with good ethics”, it is related to one's personal identity. Also, one participant mentioned that “people without religion, I'd see them like they're quite rough and may not care much about others, not a soft heart person”, this indicates social identity. Therefore, religion to some extent signifies both personal identity (i.e. McCall and Simmons, 1978; Stryker and Burke, 2000) and social identity (i.e. Turner et al., 1987; Hogg and Abrams, 1988) that can then be integrated into one's self-concept. These identities somehow links to a concept of moral identity based on the Buddhist teachings (e.g. being “self-reliant” and “self-sufficient”). This in turn encourages, for example, voluntary simplicity based on the middle way in Buddhism - “the middle way between want and extravagance and between over-consumption and under-consumption” (Pruetipibultham, 2010, p.101).

Although Buddhism in the Thai context influences the individuals' moral self and ethical consumption, ethical decision and behaviour can be impacted from religious belief regardless of a particular religion. This study, thereby, refers to the term 'religiosity' to further address on the role of religiosity to the self and ethical consumption in the discussion chapter.

In addition to religion affecting the self and ethical consumption, other social values are also found in this study. It indicated that social interaction and significant others has been giving meanings to one's self in terms of morals and ethics. Giving these points, the next section will explore the impact of these social values in the ethical consumption context.

5.3 Significant others and society impacting on the self and ethical consumption

Apart from the inner self where intrinsic values and religious belief affecting on consumer ethics, external factors also influence individuals to consume ethically and help the individuals to develop the moral/ethical self. These external determinants (e.g. significant others, social influence) that emerge from the interviews include family, friends, schooling, role models, society and environment.

From the findings in most cases, it shows that family is a very fundamental element shaping one's moral judgement and ethical behaviour. Some participants, such as *Umapon*, *Yingyot*, *Krittapak* and *Ploynatda* indicated that they learn and imitate the behaviour from family. The way they have lived and absorbed from the family members also make the participants become more similar to the family in terms of attitude, lifestyles, and personality. *Umapon*, for

example, described that her family (father and mother) has influenced the way she consumes food and chooses the product (e.g. organic food and vegetables, OTOP products). *Yingyot* also indicated his wife and daughter are the most influential persons that encourage him to have organic food.

“My family, especially my father, likes to consume vegetables with no chemicals. He likes things that are good for health and nature; things like natural products. He likes those of organic products but may be not much of fairtrade. I listen to him (father) because he is a kind like, well, encourages me to have some vegetables. Sometimes I don’t want to have it but I feel I should have it. I usually have some organic fruits and green smoothie mixed with oats or chia seeds, some salad and coffee every morning at home. [...] She (mother) also likes to use One Tambon One Products (OTOP). She likes them a lot. Well, she doesn’t quite use plastic bags. She uses cloth bags. [...] so I, well, get used to it and I even notice that as I’m getting older, I’m becoming just like them.” (Umapon) (See the extended case in *Appendix F*) family influence on the self and ethical consumption)

“What I will regularly buy since I had daughter is to specifically select only organic. At first I didn’t know that they are good for environment. At that time, I just thought that it might be safe when having them rather than other goods. It might be safe for me, my wife and my kid. Since we knew that it’s good for our health and the environment, my wife tells me to buy only organic products.” (Yingyot)

Another family impact on lifestyle, behaviour and even identity can be seen from the cases of *Krittapak* and *Ploynatda*. *Krittapak* highlights that her mother has impacted on her life and she has taken her as a good example for ways of living (e.g. her mother is simple) and actions (e.g. her mother helps people).

“Actually, my family is also simple. Everyone is easy and not too over the top. So, it made me to be a person that uses simple thing, eats simple food, and has simple lifestyles. My mother always helps others people;

she lives in her own way and does not follow the others and society at all. She is simple and thinks about other's feeling, even before herself. And it's because we are very close, she influences me, like she's my example." (Krittapak)

Importantly, *Playnatda* highlighted that her grandmother and aunt are the person, who has imprinted on her for a kind-hearted person. She learns good and bad things about life from them. Another person that has an important influence on the self and ethical consumption is her life partner; and it was when she firstly tried organic tea. Then, she was interested in the organic product more and started to study about it. By learning and having direct experiences from the family, *Playnatda* admits that it brings her to 'who she is' today.

"The one who took care of me was my grandmother and my aunt. They did not teach me everything on how to do things, which one is right or wrong all the time, but the way of who I am, is because I have absorbed from them, because I grew up with them, learning from what they've done. As for a kind hearted person, I also got that from my grandmother, because my grandmother likes to go to the temple and makes merit, believes in the religion, believes in the good deeds and karma. [...] if there is a very old lady, merely blind, but making flower bouquet instead of begging, I will help this type of people. [...] For now, I have my partner, my life partner. We have been living together for almost seven years now. [...] I think he makes me a better person and I'm behaving just like him, in a good way. He makes me like more mature, patient, and future-oriented, because the present will impact the future. [...] I started to know and try organic tea because of my partner, he was my boyfriend back then in the UK." (Ploynatda) (See *Appendix D*) for the extended case, family influence on the self and ethical consumption)

In addition to family and partner that have shaped a concept of self and consumption behaviour, to some extent they are the reason that *Ploynatda*

decides to engage in ethical consumption. They are one of the most important persons, who she loves and wants to choose only a good thing for them.

“They are the people close to me and who I love. I care for them. Like, my grandmother is very old now, I want to her to have only healthy and good food. [...] Then, my partner and I, we love organic food now. It’s good for our health.” (Ploynata)

On the other hand, *Nittaya* uses the family situation in the past to relate to herself and decision on ethical consumption. With the loss of *Nittaya*’s husband, she has learnt from that experience and this has bought her to take a better care on herself and her children. She prefers to use fewer chemicals on food and to purchase organic food for the family. This incident does not only result when *Nittaya* focuses more on a good health condition of her family, but she is also willing to help to build a healthy society.

“My husband died from cancer so after confronting with this situation, I told people to look after their health and well prepare for their lives, like my children, they bought life insurance for their father. My family then started to take care of our health and the food, which is very important we try to have mostly organic food. From what I see in our society and the loss of my husband, I have taken a good care of myself and my children and also the society. I feel like we should try to have fewer chemicals in life. I still want to see my children living their lives, want to see my grandchildren, and want to spend time with them.” (Nittaya)

Furthermore, some participants also identify that a group of friends is one of the social impacts on the self and ethical consumption. It is indicated that sometimes they share lifestyle, personality, and ways of consumption among friends.

“Then, may be like friends [...] society that I am in. We have some kind of similar lifestyle, like; we have simple life, using things that are not too expensive. We are not like, going out just for shopping, spending all money, just not like that.” (Krittapak)

“I have friends and we are quite similar; our lifestyle and character. But, I don’t have many friends. When I choose a friend, he/she has the same characters as mine. A few friends with the same attitude are better than thousand friends, no need to have a lot of friends. I enjoy to have them in my life, we like a countryside lifestyle; we like to go to the beach, we don’t like clubbing. On my birthday, we go to the temple, make merit and bring some food to orphanage.” (Sameujai)

In some case, the participant learns from friends and even uses them as an example of inappropriate behaviour. Yet, friends are not a powerful source of influence on self as it cannot actually change the self. *Ladda* pointed out that friends do not have an impact on the self although she still goes out with her friends. Rather, she learns from those behaviours and the consequences from them.

“In my society, I will consider if any of my friends do spend a lot, I feel empathetic to their husbands. Frankly speaking, the society can’t change who I am or have any impacts on my style. I am who I am. We have a gathering twice a year. And since we have had a family, we barely go out and have fun. But, I like to compare them to me. If this is good, I will keep in my mind and if this is bad, I ignore. Some of my friends they spend too much on luxurious things and that make them need to find more extra money; they work more on the weekend. I feel bad about it. They are like feeling happy to have a beautiful designer bag today and in the next days they are stressed out. I saw that and I know that it isn’t happiness. It’s just for social status and it causes yourself trouble.” (Ladda)

Another group of significant others that is described to have a crucial effect on one’s self, personal attitude, ways of life and consumption is role model. The

persons that are referred to are the King and the actor, who have some impact on the individuals (e.g. *Panya* as sufficient living, *Umapon* as green living) in terms of ideas and behaviour. The role models even inspire the participants to consider ethics to the self and experience ethical consumption.

“If there is a campaign on green earth, with my idol like “P Kong” (Saharat Sangkapreecha), this makes me want to join the activity. I usually like green campaigns. I like to help our society; I enjoy it very much, like to go out to grow more trees or to help recycling things. But, having P’Kong makes me want to do even more. He is a nature lover person, who likes to live close to trees and nature. He doesn’t like to go for shopping or go to night club. He loves to do some other activities like cycling or hiking. I also like such kind of lifestyle. He was a presenter of global warming campaign or something related to nature. Well, from that point when I decided to buy car, I looked for a hybrid car. I think at least I can find something that helps to reduce the use of petrol, just half is good enough. I’ve been using the hybrid car more than five years.” (Umapon)

Panya, who has an inspiration of retaining and regaining all the beautiful nature and culture in Thailand from the past, exemplifies the King of Thailand as a role model of balancing heritage, social development and modern technology. Underlying this core concept, *Panya* follows the King that is called *Sayt-ta-git-por-piang* or the philosophy of sufficiency economy (see the extended case on this concept and how it has applied to *Panya*’s life in *Appendix E*, role models). With this concept, he does not focus only on gaining the benefits, but he is also willing to give something good back to the society in the forms of, for examples, organic farming and simple or sufficient living. This philosophy is in line with *Panya*’s self, personal values and lifestyle.

“Since I understand the philosophy and science of the concept that His Majesty has tried to tell us, I want to let people see that too and if we

seriously follow His Majesty, things in the past could come back and we could have a beautiful nature again. [...] Actually, what I got from the concept of His Majesty is long term wealth and long term happiness in all life aspects. And I'm holding to this idea and I'm trying to live my life moderately, my way of living is very simple. I don't spend on things that are unnecessary. [...] Without chemicals, plants and crops can also be grown according to the principle of His Majesty.” (Panya)

Regarding the marketing efforts, an advertisement of ethical campaigns including those of corporate social responsibility campaigns also affects the respondents' decision making on ethical consumption. For instance, *Yingyot* and *Umapon* pointed out that:

“There is no effect from the society but the advertising will affect me. I think it's in my head; the idea has been developed in me and somehow has made me feel like Siam Cement Group is very good and responsible. When going to buy paper, I take the product of Siam Cement Group if it's in the shop, I choose it.” (Yingyot)

“Sometimes I saw an advertising or brochure that, well, it helps the Third World countries. For me, it's like a win-win offer. We gain from the other side, we could help them too. Certain things that I didn't see from TV, but someone told me that it is good, it's organic, let's try, it's healthy, and we can help the world.” (Umapon)

From a broader standpoint, people in the society or what have been happening in the society, likewise, influence ethical consumption decision and the self. Some participants highlighted that not only family and close persons are involved in the decision and behaviour, but also society, people in the society and social norms. *Pichaed*, for example, clarified that “doing a right thing needs to look at social norms too.” However, accepting the social norms does not mean that the action is always ethical. This can be seen from when *Pichaed*

argued that “if it’s a norm then we have to see whether it’s a good or bad one.” Moreover, although society relates to how the participants make decisions on the consumption and behave ethically, *Ploynatda* and *Krittapak* pointed out that society certainly affects them, but a closer society and environment is more influential to the self and their ethical decisions.

“For an overall society, such as what I have seen and faced in our society, I will acknowledge about that, but I don’t usually follow the social trend. If I am going to do something, I will think and ask myself, whether it’s appropriate. If it’s appropriate, then I will do it according to my preference. But sure, the external society also plays some part but not all for me. It (society) did not directly impact on real me (i.e. to my true self). Society in general, I did not change me, because, the external party, they did not know me well. Even if I’m good, they may not know that I’m good, at the same time if I’m bad, they may not know that too. However, family, society at school, and nearby society are where I spent or have been spending my daily life with, for me it does impact me, indeed.”
(*Ploynatda*)

“It (society) influences me but my society at work is very materialistic. And sometimes I conflicts myself with these people and environment around me. I don’t follow them. I feel not well blended and sometimes I can feel pressure from this society that they look at me from the outside; the appearance. But I don’t mind to be me. If I have money or get rich, I will spend my money on travelling instead; or set up my own business. I’m not being anti-designer brands. If I have enough money to spend on it, I will buy it; but not that because I have to live with it. I think it depends on the person, like how you give priorities in life.” (*Krittapak*)

Also, *Umapon* explained that society to some extent cannot change the way she thinks and behaves ethically. There are some social contexts and intention involved in the process. *Umapon* demonstrated that in some situations when

the behaviour is seen to be right or wrong by other people, she tends to consider the contexts around the behaviour as well as its intentions and consequences.

“I believe in myself first, not all, but I ask myself first. Then, I look at what I believe and the others believe. [...] if it doesn't cause any problems to other people and people don't suffer from what I've done, then it's fine with me to do that.” (Umapon) (See *Appendix F* for the extended case, external society and ethical behaviour)

Furthermore, the living environment can change the way the participant lives his or her life and consumption. *Krittapak* described that when she travels to countryside, she tends to adjust herself according to the environment and surroundings. *Krittapak* lives a simpler life comparing to city life she normally has. Also, the changing environment and society have caused *Sameujai* to maintain himself to the beautiful Thai traditions, representing the self through Thai values.

“When I travel or move to upcountry, I don't consume like when I'm in the city. I use more local and natural products. My family, we own a house in the upcountry and we live very simple like our grandparents did. As when I move back to live in the city, I can adapt myself. I don't have any problem to live in whether it's rural or city environment. But this doesn't change who I am; it may just change the way I live my life at some point.” (Krittapak)

“No (society doesn't shape me), because I don't like politics or social movements like star gossip or else. I like being Thai, real Thai. When talking about Thai society, it means a kindness in the Thai ways; Thai family, Thai ways of life. If the thing that will affect my life, it would be Thai identity and Thai culture and traditions in the past.” (Sameujai)

Nonetheless, for the sake of the whole society it drives the participants to engage in ethical consumption that in turn motivates the individuals to be more social concerned. Some social situations have bought sympathy that even encourages the participants to help the society through consumption. *Nittaya* feels the need for educating other people about organic farming so that they can grow food at home by using non-chemicals.

“I can't be discouraged since I think of our families and our society. If when I felt discouraged, our society will be more terrible. Therefore, the society must be good so that our kids will be the good and healthy persons. I want to help them to have a healthy life. All benefits will get back to us, to all of us including me and my family.” (Nittaya)

When *Panya* explained that when he saw people in the society, including his friends are getting sick, he knows that something is wrong in ways of life and our society. So, he decided to do the organic farming more serious and encouraged people to change to an organic lifestyle.

“In our society nowadays, there are only sick people. When asked, there is only eating things. We should have more organic or natural food. Chemicals are killing us and our society. I have money to buy organic food that is quite expensive, but others who don't; they can grow organic vegetables at home.” (Panya)

As it is found that social influences has impacted on one's concept of self and ethical consumption, significant statements that are taken out from the interviewing conversations are presented in table 5.9. Regarding the data analysis, the findings are contextualised through lived stories and ethical consumption experiences in relation to social contexts. Self-concept is also reflected and shown across the interviews of each participant.

After different significant statements are identified in table 5.9, they are formulated into meanings in table 5.10. The individuals show that society and people influences concepts of self including the moral self and identity, attitude, personality or persona traits, lifestyle, and behaviour. In most case, “family” factor appears to shape one’s self and ways of living, leading to different contexts of ethical consumption, such as OTOP products, cloth bag or bag for life, simple living or moderate consumption, and organic food. “Friends” and the individuals share their personality, lifestyle and attitude, in which they are more likely to have similar interests, activities and consumption-type. The individuals also see some life examples from friends and role models. The “role model” factor is used as guidance, example and underlying concept when the individuals decide or behave ethically. “Advertisement” of ethical campaigns is influential to the individuals as the motivational and informative drives of ethical consumption. Also, the advertisement, in some case, affects ethical consumption decisions in an intuitive way. Last, “society in general and external social environment” is a broader social factor that also impacts on decisions of ethical consumption.

Table 5.9: Significant statements: significant others, social and environmental factors and ethical consumption through the self

Significant statements: Significant others, social and environmental factors and ethical consumption through the self

- My family, especially my father
- She (mother) also likes to use one Tambon one products (OTOP)
- She (mother) doesn't quite use plastic bags. She uses cloth bags
- I, well, get used to it
- I even notice that as I'm getting older, I'm becoming just like them
- My family is also simple
- It made me to be a person that uses simple thing, eats simple food, and has simple lifestyles
- It's because we are very close, she influences me, like she's my example
- My grandmother and my aunt
- I have absorbed from them, because I grew up with them, learning from what they've done
- A kind hearted person, I also got that from my grandmother
- My life partner
- He makes me a better person and I'm behaving just like him, in a good way
- I started to know and try organic tea because of my partner
- They are the people close to me and who I love
- I care for them
- My husband died from cancer so after confronting with this situation, I told people to look after their health and well prepare for their lives
- My family then started to take care of our health and the food
- We try to have mostly organic food
- From what I see in our society and the loss of my husband, I have taken a good care of myself and my children also the society
- Friends...society that I am in
- We have some kind of similar lifestyle, like; we have simple life
- I have friends and we are quite similar; our lifestyle and character
- When I choose a friend, he/she has the same characters as mine
- We go to the temple, make merit and bring some food to orphanage
- If any of my friends do spend a lot, I feel empathetic to their husbands
- The society can't change who I am or have any impacts on my style. I am who I am
- But, I like to compare them to me.
- If this is good, I will keep in my mind and if this is bad, I ignore.
- If there is a campaign on green earth, with my idol like "P Kong", this makes me want to join the activity.
- But, having P'Kong makes me want to do even more
- I also like such kind of lifestyle
- I've been using the hybrid car more than 5 years

Significant statements: Significant others, social and environmental factors and ethical consumption through the self

- If we seriously follow His Majesty, things in the past could come back and we could have a beautiful nature again
- Actually, what I got from the concept of His Majesty is long term wealth and long term happiness in all life aspects
- And I'm holding to this idea and I'm trying to live my life moderately, my way of living is very simple.
- The advertising will affect me
- It has implanted into me
- When going to buy paper, I take the product of Siam Cement Group if it's in the shop, I choose it
- Certain things that I didn't see from TV, but someone told me that it is good, it's organic, let's try, it's healthy, and we can help the world
- I will acknowledge about that, but I don't usually follow the social trend
- The external society also plays some part but not all for me.
- It (society) did not directly impact on real me (i.e. to my true self).
- Society in general, I did not change me, because, the external party, they did not know me well.
- Family, society at school, and nearby society are where I spent or have been spending my daily life with, for me it does impact me
- Sometimes I conflicts myself with these people and environment around me
- I don't follow them
- I feel not well blended and sometimes I can feel pressure
- I believe in myself first, not all, but I ask myself first. Then, I look at what I believe and the others believe
- If it doesn't cause any problems to other people and people don't suffer from what I've done, then it's fine with me to do that
- When I travel or move to upcountry, I don't consume like when I'm in the city
- But this doesn't change who I am; it may just change the way I live my life at some point
- No (society doesn't shape me), because I don't like politics or social movements like star gossip or else
- If the thing that will affect my life, it would be Thai identity and Thai culture and traditions in the past
- I can't be discouraged since I think of our families and our society
- The society must be good so that our kids will be the good and healthy persons
- In our society nowadays, there are only sick people

Table 5.10: Formulated meanings of significant statements: significant others, social and environmental factors and ethical consumption through the self

Meanings of significant others, social and environmental factors and ethical consumption through the self

- Family members (e.g. parents, grandparents, relatives, and life partner) shape one's concepts of self including moral/ethical self
- Family affects the way the person consume ethically through different contexts of ethical consumption
- The person is becoming similar to his/her family in terms of identity, personality, attitude, lifestyle and behaviour
- The person shares personal values with his/her family
- The person shares his/her personality, lifestyle and attitude with close friends
- The group of friends are the person tends to have similar personal interests and engage in similar activities and consumption
- Moral identity (e.g. a kind hearted, simple, and caring person) is constructed from social influences (e.g. family, close friends and role models) that in turn encourages ethical consumption experiences
- The advertisement, in some case, affects ethical consumption decisions in an intuitive way and acts as a motivational and informative drive to the person
- Society (i.e. external environment) shapes only some parts of the self, but it still motivates the person to engage in ethical consumption for the sake of the whole society benefits.
- Bad experiences in the past (e.g. loss of husband, seeing sick people) even encourage the person to help people in the society through ethical consumption
- When there are some differences in lifestyles and personal values between the person and society, the person tends to stay true to the self
- Social or peer pressure, in some case, cannot puts pressure on the person and the way he/she consume.

Ultimately, benefits given to the whole society and family can motivate the individuals to engage in ethical consumption as well as to accept the social values to the self. Experiencing negative or bad incidents in life can even make the individuals to be more willing to help other people in the society through ethical behaviour and consumption. However, the society in general does not have a strong impact on the self-concept as it only shapes some parts of the self. When there is a high social pressure that attempts to change the individual's behaviour, this is seen as a weak force to the self in the ethical context (e.g. right or wrong action, appropriate behaviour from social viewpoint). The individual rather tends to not follow this social situation. After these meanings of social influences to the self and ethical consumption are generated, common themes are group to create exhaustive description, presented in 5.11 and 5.12 respectively.

Table 5.11: Clusters of common themes of significant others, social and environmental factors and ethical consumption through the self

Social influencers to the self and ethical consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family - Friends - Role models - Marketing efforts/activities - Society and external environment
Bonding social environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Society where the person has grown up and lived in for a long time has stronger influence to the self and ethical consumption behaviour than the distant or unfamiliar society

Impacted by social influences

- Concept/sense of self
- Moral self
- Moral identity
- Personality/ personal traits
- Personal values
- Attitudes
- Lifestyles
- Consumption behaviour

Drives of ethical consumption relating to social influences

- Social benefits
- Family benefits
- Better and healthy life condition

Table 5.12: Exhaustive description of significant others, social and environmental factors through the self

Exhaustive description of significant others, social and environmental factors through the self
<p>Social influencers relate to the self and ethical consumption including family, friends, role models, marketing efforts or activities and society and external environment. The groups of people, who have strong impacts to one's self-concept and experiences of ethical consumption, are called 'significant others' as they are important and influential to the individuals in terms of personal values, the moral self, personality, lifestyle, attitudes, and consumption behaviour. Apart from the significant others, social environment is also affect the self and the way the individuals consume. It reveals that close or bonding social environment is more powerful to shape one's self and consumption behaviour than distant social environment. Thus, society and people in the society has less effect to the self and changes behaviour (i.e. it cannot change one's concept of self and behaviour). With respect to the distant environment and insignificant others, the individuals tends to represent a concept of self; maintain the real self; and even insist on the behaviour they had decided. Regardless of different social influencers, when considering social and family benefits, these motivates the individuals to engage in ethical consumption with the aim of helping others and society.</p>

In addition to an influential role of social factors, it shows that social factors including families, friends, role models (i.e. significant others) in the society also have an impact on reminding or monitoring oneself to behave and consume ethically. People in society might influence the decision of the participants when they view ethical behaviour, however, it depends on situational contexts and personal intention. Interestingly, it emerges from the findings that to some extent individuals need to be monitored their ethical judgements. Hence, it can be indicated that social influence not only interacts to the self and relates to

ethical consumption, but also be used as part of self-monitoring to ethical behaviour (further findings on self-monitoring in section 5.4)

5.4 Self-monitoring functioning in the self and ethical consumption

Ethical consumption for some participants needs reminders or control when making decisions. Self-monitoring captures both the self-observation and self-control of individuals (Kavak et al., 2009) that occurs within one's self, internally and externally, with respect to cues for proper behaviour, and thus for ethical behaviour (Synder, 1974). From the findings in this study, self-monitoring plays a role of behavioural controlling function in the relationship between self-concept and ethical consumption. It reveals that although the moral self includes an overall view of the self, an individual sometimes monitors him- or herself to, for example, not be frugal, or not buy unethical products, and to be kind to others. However, very often self-monitoring happens automatically when making ethical decisions:

“Because I've been aware of it, I've been taught since I was young that this is bad, it's wrong, I shouldn't do bad things. Many things I've been fostered in and taught, whether from my parents, teachers or religion, they will remind me in deciding to do, to choose, to buy something. When I want to eat or use something, I also look for morals apart from core values, like not feeling hungry, the taste or convenience. I use things that I've been encouraged to; well, to think of other people not only myself. Instead of using stuff that is produced by child labour or, for example, CP (Charoen Pokphand Company) products that use a lot of chemicals to stimulate animal growth, I use stuff from other places. I don't support them. It quite automatically reminds me. Even when I just see the CP logo, I would say no to it. It happens automatically.” (Umapon; No child labour, non-chemical products)

"I don't consume things that are unnecessary. If it isn't useful I don't do it. I gave up eating beef and lamb. I tell myself it's just for the sake of my health and animals. At first I tried not to eat beef as I've long eaten it and it's delicious. But after that I realised that it could be unhealthy and the cows are tortured so much. I saw no point in continuing to have it. So I finally gave up all beef. There was also some information that I found on the packaging that is not true about meat, because I know every stage from feeding to killing as I have been in this business for more than 30 years. This industry can do many things that are not normal, such as a breeding process that can make a cow give birth three times a year instead of once a year as naturally. They can collect sperm from the male and inject it into hundreds of females. It's technology that can provide 31 million cows a year for America; without it this amount could not be achieved. In America all substances will be put into animals for their speedy growth. It's a sad story that just responds to our greed and we harm animals. Cows that are treated with technology will not be considered as having a life, just because people want to eat soft meat. I consider this is not ethical for both the producers and consumers." (Vaivat; No beef consumption)

"[...] because I don't like taking advantage of or hurting people, even directly or indirectly [...] sometimes I automatically remind myself what I should buy. In this case I know what is good or bad and how it was made. If it's bad, like fake, uncopyrighted things, I don't buy it." (Pichaed; Copyrighted products)

"Yes, when I cook for others, I always think of the benefit that others will have when they eat it. I always think this way and choose the food that is useful to eat, including food for offering to the monks. For living food, it happens quite automatically because I feel bad about buying those. I tell myself to buy things that are good for my children although they are expensive, but if they are more healthy and useful, I buy them. Like Fairtrade and organic food, I buy it. My family in the morning we always have raw vegetable and fruit smoothies and cereals, because it is easy to do and healthy. So I have to choose only organic vegetables and fruit

to do it as I don't cook it, I just blend it. After I knew that organic things not only make us healthier but other benefits too, like saving our environment, I like it more, no surprise." (Ladda; Fairtrade and organic food)

Furthermore, in some cases self-monitoring has a direct impact on ethical consumption experiences. It is stated that in order not to overspend, for example, the participants in some circumstances need to control their behaviour or thinking that can cause overconsumption:

"To avoid overspending, I try to control myself, like not going shopping without a plan, because I still want this and that. So sometimes I was just wandering around the department store and I ended up with a handful of shopping bags. But that's just in the past. Now I rarely buy things that I don't really need." (Nittaya; Less spending, voluntary simplicity)

"It (self-monitoring) has an impact on me not to overspend or to consume only what has benefits for me. I do think several times before buying anything. For example, when I want to go shopping or to buy food, I will buy only what is necessary. If the products are from the Thai people or community that bring earnings to develop the community, I would love to buy them even more." (Krittapak; Less spending, OTOP)

"To monitor myself, actually it's like a sense telling me. Me, mostly I tell myself not to overspend on things, because I try to not too spoil myself and being economic in a sense. Because sometimes I still have a feeling that I want, for example, new collections like clothing and shoes. So I was like asking myself if it is necessary. By doing this, it helps me to

save more money and I can balance my income and expenses each month. I'm more secure in a sense." (Krittapak; Less spending)

From the conversations, Table 5.13 highlights the significant statements that show the role of self-monitoring relating to the self in the context of ethical consumption. This data analysis is followed by the formulated meanings, common themes and exhaustive description provided in each table.

Table 5.13: Significant statements: self-monitoring and ethical consumption

Significant statements: self-monitoring and ethical consumption

- Because I've been aware of it, I've been taught since I was young that this is bad, it's wrong, I shouldn't do bad things
- Many things I've been fostered in and taught whether from my parents, teachers or religion, they will remind me in deciding to do, to choose, to buy something
- I use things that I've been encouraged to; well, to think of other people not only myself
- I tell myself just for the sake of my health and animals
- But after that I realised that it could be unhealthy and the cows are tortured so much. I saw no point in continuing to have it. So I finally gave up all beef
- It's quite automatically reminding me. Even when I just see the CP logo, I would say no to it. It happens automatically
- ... because I don't like taking advantage of or hurting people, even directly or indirectly ... sometimes I automatically remind myself what I should buy
- I always think of the benefit of others
- For living food, it happens quite automatically because I feel bad about buying these. I tell myself to buy things that are good for my children although they are expensive, but if they are more healthy and useful, I buy them
- To not overspend, I try to control myself, like not going shopping without a plan, because I still want to do this and that
- I do think several times before buying anything
- To monitor myself, actually it's like a sense telling me. Me, mostly I tell myself not to overspend on things, because I try to not too spoil myself and being economic in a sense
- So I was like asking myself if it is necessary

From the findings and the important statements in Table 5.13, it can be seen that if "emotion" is involved in a certain circumstance, the participant is likely to

deliberately monitor themselves to engage in ethical consumption or choose ethical products. In some cases, the participants question themselves before taking further action in order to reassure themselves about right and appropriate behaviour. However, most of the participants monitor themselves almost in similar ways by, for example, “tell myself”, “remind myself” and “ask myself”. Furthermore, some participants try to monitor themselves to be in line with the moral values and beliefs that they have been taught in life, in which ethical consumption can be seen at the end.

Table 5.14: Formulated meanings of self-monitoring in relation to ethical consumption

Meanings of self-monitoring and ethical consumption

- Ethical consumption is monitored through the person's lived experiences, including things that they have been taught and raised with
- By thinking of the bad results that could happen, it could stop that behaviour, while automatically reminding the self, i.e. only seeing the logo of the company can remind oneself not to buy it, in order not to choose unethical consumption
- The person reminds him/herself based on the concept of self that he/she personally does not take advantage of others
- Good consequences or benefits of the product can make the person consume ethically
- The person controls improper or unnecessary behaviour by asking or reminding the self
- In some cases, it is a sense of oneself that tells the person what to do when making ethical consumption decisions

Table 5.15: Clusters of common themes of self-monitoring and ethical consumption

Self-monitoring through lived experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitors ethical consumption in line with beliefs and values brought from family, schooling and religion - Being aware of what has been taught in terms of morality and ethics, good things and bad things
Self-monitoring through foreseen outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With the benefits gained from having (ethical) products, the person tells him/herself to purchase something for the sake of others or animal welfare
Self-monitoring through a sense of self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The person monitors his/her behaviour to consume ethically corresponding to his/her actual self - It is a sense of self that reminds the person not to overspend on consumption
Automatic self-monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having an emotional involvement, i.e. feeling bad about living food, enables the person to voluntarily monitor consumption behaviour - By using a personal sense to direct ethical consumption, this can happen quite automatically
Direct control over	

behaviour

- Ethical consumption behaviour is directly monitored by the person asking or reminding the self, for example, not to overspend

Table 5.16: Exhaustive description of self-monitoring and ethical consumption

Exhaustive description of self-monitoring and ethical consumption

For the person to behave and consume ethically, self-monitoring to some extent plays an influential and interacting role in relation to one's self and directly to ethical consumption. It is seen that ethical consumption is monitored through one's personal lived experiences, including upbringing, schooling and religion, which have provided some moral values to the self. In addition, when the person foresees the consequences of having ethical consumption via its products, this can even make the person engage in consumption. By focusing on the self, it is found that when a 'real me' or one's self is in line with moral values, it helps in monitoring the person to consume ethically. In some case, self-monitoring is seen as helping the person to achieve the ideal self of, for example, being economical. Moreover, being aware of the self and the moral self enables the person to remind him/herself to decide on ethical consumption. Interestingly, it is noticed that when there is some emotion involved in the ethical decision, the person tends to automatically monitor the self to avoid unethical consumption or to choose ethical consumption. A personal sense is also used to monitor ethical consumption behaviour, which happens quite voluntarily. In other words, the personal sense is underpinned by one's moral sense, which influences the perception of consumption. Lastly, ethical consumption behaviour is directly monitored by the person who directs the self, for example, to avoid overconsumption.

The findings of this study show that self-monitoring has an impact on ethical consumption, whether it plays a moderating role or an influential role. A positive link between self-monitoring and ethical consumption was found from the

individuals who have monitored themselves. Factors of upbringing, religion and other lived experiences are related to the way the individuals monitor themselves. It in turn associates with the social context as one's lived experiences including some social influence that shapes one's attitude toward a proper and moral behaviour. This refers to Synder's (1974) study suggesting that the individual controls the self aimed at socially appropriate behaviour. For the study, the socially appropriate behaviour is taken into account of ethical consumption behaviour. Furthermore, self-monitoring revealed in this study captures a broader concept than self-control as the participants express both self-observation and self-control (Kavak et al., 2009). This also link to conceptual dimensions of constructing self-monitoring stated by Leone (2006), in which there is some connection between self, social, and expressive behaviour. However, some participant directs him/herself by perceived outcomes of the behaviour.

It is apparent from the findings that where emotions (e.g. being happy, proud, sad, and guilty) are involved with unethical and ethical behaviour, self-monitoring tends to automatically happen within oneself. Relating to the self, it also indicates that self-monitoring helps the individual to express the actual (moral) self; and to achieve the ideal self, such as, being economical. From this relationship, it can be seen that self-monitoring impacts on a sense of self, including different dimensions of self (i.e. actual self and ideal self).

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter captures the external values within the self-ethics relationship. These external values are related to the influence of religiosity, social interaction, and self-monitoring. Religion is seen as one of the antecedent sources of one's morality. The individuals in this study have adopted religion to the concept of self and ways of living. Religion is claimed to be part of one's self and even adhered to one's subconscious. Some individuals even use religious teachings as their motto and consider religion as a trusted place. Taking religion into the context of ethical consumption, it shows a powerful influence on an individual's self (moral self) and ethical behaviour. Most participants use religion as a guidance in life, resulting in moral practices and ethical behaviour. But, some participants argued that not only religion that drives him- or herself to consume and behave ethically, but it is a sense of self that also directs the self.

Interestingly, religion has affected many aspects of lives, including family life, social life, sufficient life, and personal life. Moreover, religion is related to an individual's mind as a spiritual refuge, which in turn shapes oneself to be more secured. With respect to religious teaching of middle path, certain moral identities are emerged, such as being self-sufficient and self-reliant, that can encourage voluntary simplicity.

In some cases, to behave and engage in ethical consumption an individual needs to monitor their behaviour. Self-monitoring is functioning and influential a relationship between one's self and ethical consumption. The individuals monitor themselves by a sense of self, lived experiences (including religion, upbringing, and social), and foreseen consequences of the behaviour. It can be seen that when personal emotion is involved, self-monitoring through a sense of

self is automatically activated, which leads to ethical consumption behaviour. On the other hand, it shows that some negative drives allow the individuals to develop moral self as well as ethical consumption behaviour. Impulse of negative emotion, such as being scared of sin or feeling awful of hurting animals, motivates the individuals to avoid unethical behaviour and results in consuming ethically.

Chapter 6

Discussion:

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the discussion on the self-ethics relationship regarding various themes and exhaustive descriptions emerged from the findings. Chapter four and five serves directions for the discussion. What have been found in previous chapters are that different aspects and dimensions of self are involved in the process of self and ethical consumption. The self is also shaped by religion (i.e. religious teachings) when experiencing in the ethical context. Moral self is underling one's ethical consumption behaviour and it is influenced by religion and other social influences (e.g. lived experiences gained from significant others). Self-monitoring then plays an interacting role between the self and ethical consumption, in which it helps to control ethical behaviour. Overall, the main discussions in this chapter pertain to the meaning of ethics in consumption and living, the self–ethics relationship, the role and impact of religiosity on ethical behaviour, and self-monitoring as a function within the process of the self and ethical consumption. The structure of the discussion chapter is presented in Figure 6.1.

Focusing on the role of the self, it should be noted that the self is based on the phenomenology, by which it posits along the continuum between internal and external drives. Within the ethical context, the moral self emerges closely to one's inner self and it is associated with substantive factors such as family, upbringing, religion and lived experiences. Through lived experiences, it was found that it is not only past and present experiences have affected an

individual and his or her ethical consuming decisions, but also the personal meanings that the individuals attaches to his or her lived experiences. From the findings of this study, self-motives (including self-esteem and self-consistency) are also perceived as one of the internal drives that encourage the individuals to engage in ethical consuming behaviour. On the other side, ethical consumption helps the individuals to construct and enhance moral (self) identity, in which the moral identity is placed slightly close to the external continuum where the self is seen from both the individual and publics. As the self impacting on the external environment, social interaction influences the self and one's ethical behaviour by referring to close social environment and distant social environment (as discussed in section 6.3.4). Apart from these factors, self-monitoring is situated on both the internal and external continuums as it relates to one's inners self, personal values, religiosity as well as social norms to guide and control the self and ethical behaviour (as discussed in section 6.5.1). With these crucial drives reflecting onto the self and ethical behaviour, it suggests that ethical consumption to some extent facilitates different aspects of self, including the actual self, ideal self, desired self, and even undesired self. This interrelationship between the self-concept and ethical consumption developed through the processes of internalisation and externalisation, presented in Figure 6.2. This overall framework is used as a direction for the discussion in this chapter.

Figure 6.1: A structure of discussion – Chapter 6

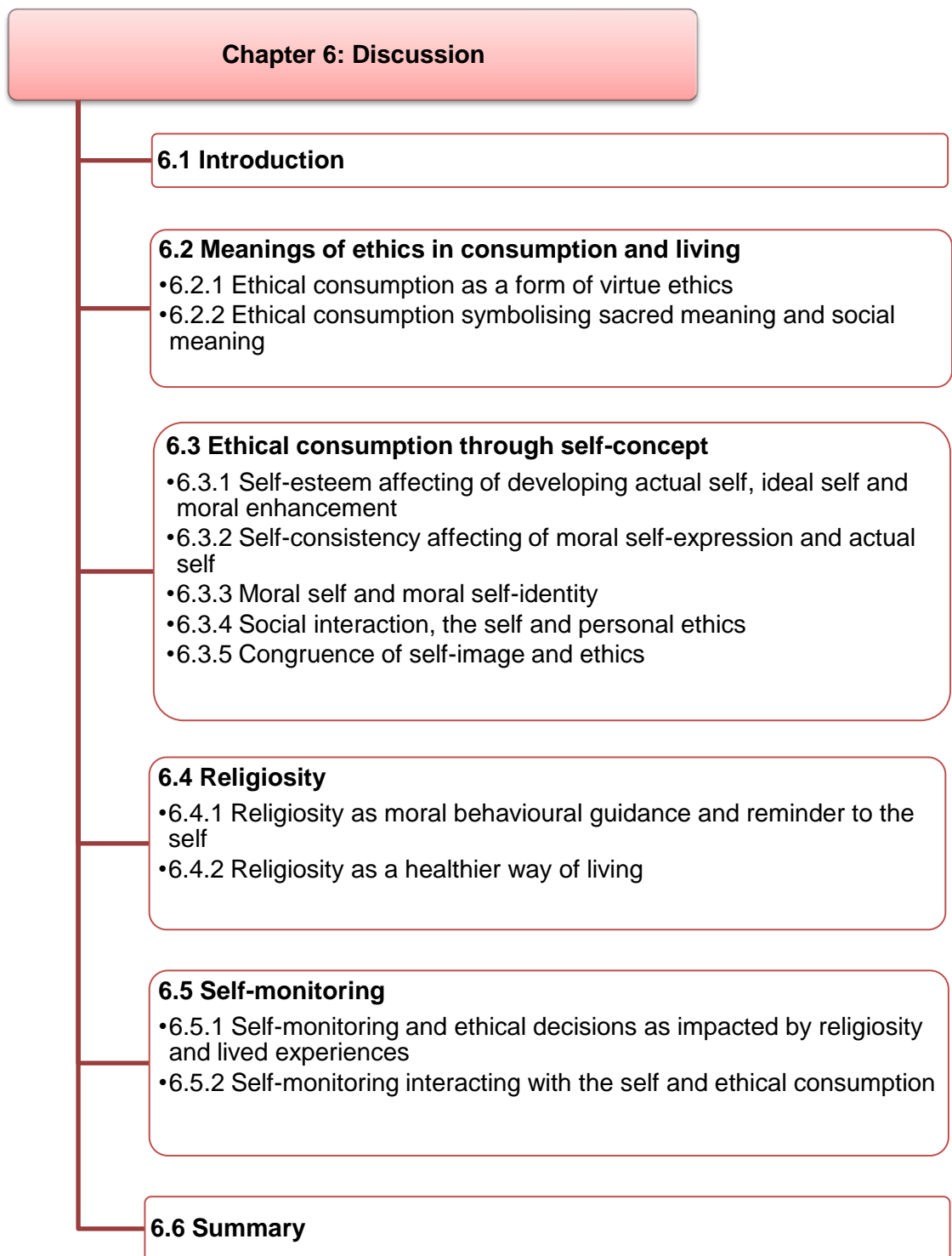
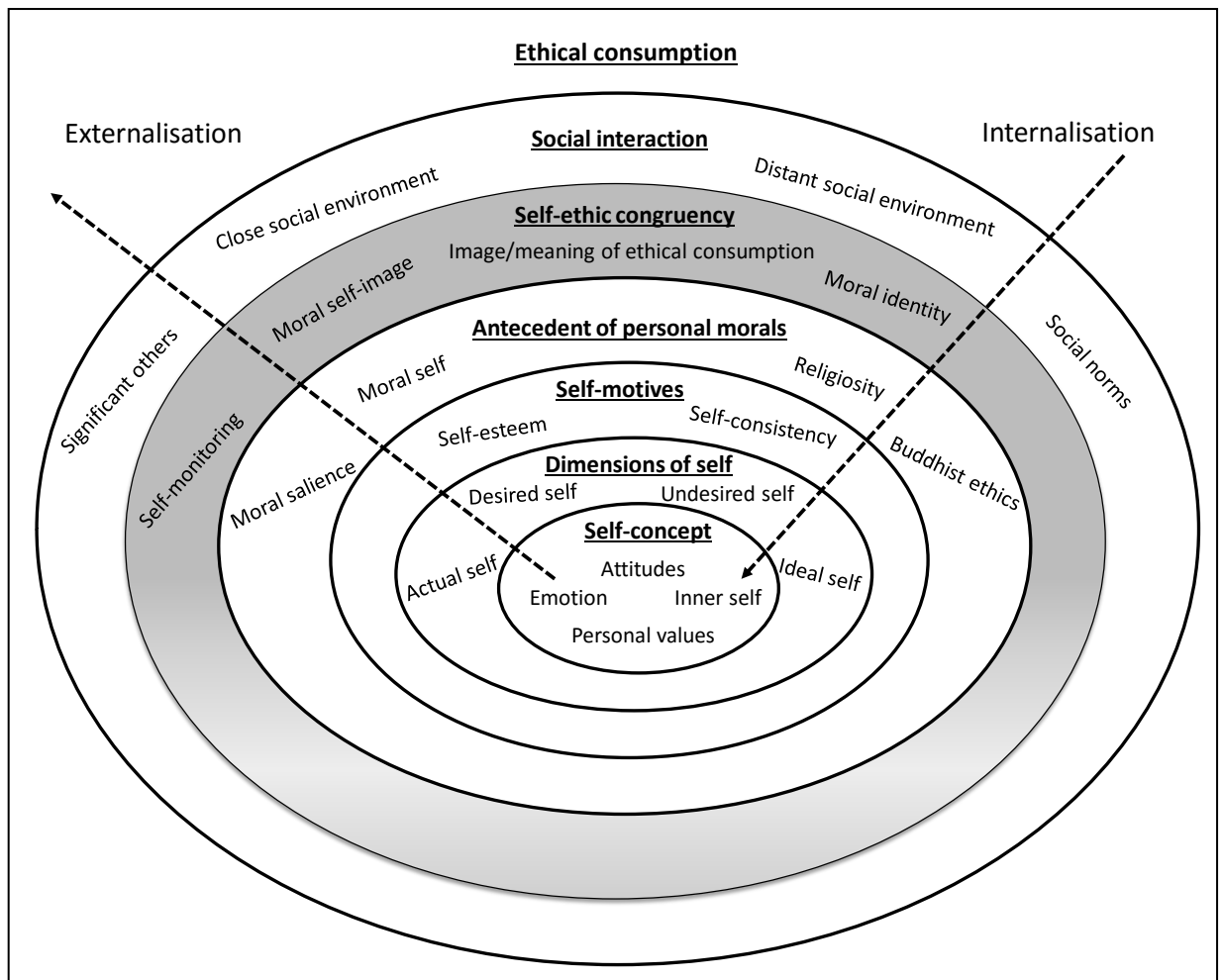


Figure 6.2: Overall conceptual framework of the role of the self in ethical consumption in the Thai consumer context



Also, it is necessary here to clarify what is meant by internalisation and externalisation. Internalisation in this study refers to a process of integrating personal values, attitudes, emotion, beliefs, lived experiences and social values into one's concept of self. Whereas, externalisation involves a process of expressing or reflecting personal meanings and one's (internal) self onto society, environment and the outside world. These two processes are rooted in psychological (Wallis & Poulton, 2001) and phenomenological (Wylie, 1961; Burn, 1979) approaches. With these processes in the current study, the self-concept is dynamic (e.g. multidimensional self) and flexible (e.g. change of the self) within an open social system.

6.2 Meanings of ethics in consumption and living

Various consumer ethics studies have attempted to investigate consumers within some specific contexts of consumption regarding how they decide on ethical products or rationalise a certain behaviour, for instance voluntary simplicity (Cherrier, 2005, 2007), fairtrade products (Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006; Wright, 2004; Low and Davenport, 2005), concerns for animal welfare (McEachern et al., 2007) and avoidance or boycotting of companies (Newholm and Shaw, 2007; Cherrier, 2007). However, it is recognised that these studies have not focused on the meaning of ethical consumption through lived experiences, personal values and one's inner self.

The current study, in order to capture key meanings of ethical consumption, notes that ethics in consumption needs to refer to more broadly ethical practices. A broader approach of viewing ethical consumption in this thesis also corroborates the ideas of Barnett (2007) and Slater and Miller (2007), who suggested that ethical consumption is rooted in "relationships of obligation" in which each consumer engages in a variety of ethical practices: as members of households, families, social networks and communities. With various contexts of ethical consumption in thesis, it extensively captures moral meanings that reflect on the multifaceted self-concept.

Based on consumers' stories and experiences of ethical consumption in the current study, it is apparent that "doing no harm to others" underlies the fundamental morals of the individuals. Feelings of sympathy, empathy, kindness and responsibility have the power to motivate individuals not to harm other people, animals, and even the environment. The "no harm" principle is an initiative leading to ethical concerns in different contexts of ethical consumption,

such as not testing products on animals, being vegetarian or consuming less meat, buying fairtrade and organic products and supporting copyrighted products. The idea of “no harm” is manifested by the consequences of a particular act. Harm has been highlighted for many decades and is also related to morality and society as a whole (Mill, 1859). Mill (1859, p.21) pointed out that:

“The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not sufficient warrant. [...] The only part of the conduct of anyone, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others.”

In consumer research, no harm/no foul is considered in the way in which consumers perceive actions as not giving any harm, so that these are perceived as acceptable or “ought to be” actions (Vitell et al., 1991). Thus, harm as a term stands on the non-moral side of ethics. To engage in ethical consumption, individuals therefore expect to do no harm in the first place. This in turn leads to the most basic expectation of moral meaning when consumers make ethical decisions; and that is to do no harm.

Particularly within the Thai consumer context, a strong value has been placed on religion in a society in which people’s morality is derived from religious beliefs and teachings. Through self-portraits and ethics perceived among individuals, ethics and ethical consumption draw on religion to help someone to be a good person to both himself and others. In other words, religion can serve as a meaning of ethical consumption. Moreover, the extent to which morality contributes to the understanding of consumption can be seen through religion. According to Weber (2002), religion is viewed as the definitive source of morality and a miscellaneous set of moral behaviour. Based on this sociological

standpoint, it is argued that the social structures and moral values of society are shaped by religion. This can also be seen in the effect of religious values when individuals choose to consume, for example sufficient or moderate consumption based on the middle path in Buddhism, and vegetarianism linked to the five precepts from Buddhist teaching.

The inner self emerges from stories of self-ethics relationship, in which it reflects individuals' personal values and leads to ethical behaviour. More than this, it sometimes allows individuals to decide unconsciously to behave ethically. It is also argued that consumers do not always act in a rational way, but tend to behave irrationally, following their inner motivations (Niinimäki, 2010). In this way, ethical consumption is chosen to match one's inner self with consuming practices and to picture what ethics means to oneself. Thus, consuming ethically, regardless of any specific context, highlights the individual's ethics on a continuum from those that are completely self-oriented to those that are less selfish and more socially oriented. So it somehow relates to the degree to which the individual holds the no harm principle or moral principle.

In terms of the ethics of consumption and its meanings from the consumer perspective, it can be seen that these associated meanings are derived from internal, psychological elements (i.e. the self, personal values, and one's own morals). Most importantly, ethics in the Thai context is related to religiosity, which influences consumers' morals and religious beliefs. The religious beliefs in this thesis are seen to affect the individual's internal states (e.g. feelings and emotions) and moral self-interest. With respect to religion, in Thailand over 90% of the population is Buddhist (Mill, 1999). Thus, Buddhist ethics (section 6.2.1)

is considered relevant to explain the underlying values of the self in relation to ethics, particularly in the Thai context. Ethical consumption also symbolises sacred meanings and social meanings (section 6.2.2).

6.2.1 Ethical consumption as a form of Buddhist ethics

Buddhist ethics is reflected through the ethical consumption experiences of consumers in this thesis, which helps to address “what actually people do in Thailand when they think about ethics and consumption”. In most cases, ethical thinking among consumers (i.e. the participants) in this thesis is based upon the Buddha’s *Dhamma* – that is, Buddhist teachings. The most basic principles of *Dhamma* is to encourage people to do good deeds that benefit themselves and others, as everyone is responsible for his or her own actions:

“I am owner of my kamma, heir to my kamma, born of my kamma, relate to my kamma, abide supported by my kamma. Whatever kamma I shall do, whether good or evil, of that shall I be heir.” (Dhammapada, verse 165)

“By oneself doing evil,
does one defile oneself,
oneself not doing evil,
one purifies oneself;
purity, impurity depend upon oneself,
no one can purify another.” (Dhammapada, verse 165)

The two statements above indicate that moral responsibility is thoroughly established in Buddhism. It implies that people (i.e. Buddhists) who engage in unethical actions, or particularly break the five precepts (*Sin Ha*), will be impacted (sooner or later) by the results of those actions. The term *kamma* (i.e. action or doing) is a fundamental teaching in Buddhism (Mills, 1999), and it is a central concept to link one’s own actions to the self. Thai people are taught to think before doing, as “kamma which has been made cannot be unmade or

washed away through faith or rituals” (Mills, 1999, p.34). Thus, being “thoughtful” (a term used by the participants) is a means of ensuring appropriate and moral conduct in the Thai context (discussed further in section 6.4.2).

Ethics in Buddhism is viewed through *Dhamma* by consumers. It is claimed that *Dhamma* is “the truth with us” (Mills, 1999, p.1), in which it is a method, rather than a doctrine. This is why Buddhist teachings are related to approaches (e.g. lifestyles, ways of life, and consumption) that a person can apply to his or her own life. In some sense, *Dhamma* is used as a prescribed ethical guide for Thai consumers; however, as it is considered a method, people tend to use it when it suits them. This leaves some flexibility for subjective judgements on ethics and ethical consumption. For instance, *Ploynatda* often gives money to or buys products from the elderly not for only moral reason (as taught by Buddhism), but because she also feels pity for them due to her feelings for and close relationship with her grandma. *Krittapak* admits that although religion is her “spiritual anchor”, she cannot always follow the teachings, depending on situations and environment (e.g. no meat consumption as a means to do no harm to animals). *Ladda* considers eating living food as more unethical than eating normal meat. This to some extent reflects the consumers’ morals, as guided by religion, along with their subjective feelings and experiences. From this standpoint, it can be said that Buddhism (including its moral teachings) is applicable to everyday situations and consumption.

Furthermore, as Buddhists believe in “rebirth”, and *kamma* plays a part in future life (Mills, 1999), this has made Thai consumers aim for good deeds and be more aware of (un)ethical actions. This can be seen, in some cases, as a source of inspiration for doing no harm to others. When bad *kamma* is

developed, it also links to sin. This was touched upon in the context of, for example, no fur clothes (*Umapon*) and use of non-animal-testing products (*Ploynatda*) (sin and ethical consumption is further discussed in section 6.4.1).

One obvious linkage between Buddhist ethics and ethical consumption is the debate regarding materialism and consumerism. Consumer culture and consumerism (i.e. excessive consumption) are considered by Buddhism as outcomes of three “poisons”, including greed, hatred, and delusion (Pace, 2013). “Greed”, “hatred”, and “delusion” are considered unpleasant or “bad” characteristics for Buddhists. When it comes to consumption, these characteristics pertain to excessive consumption – which is unethical in Buddhism. Another Buddhist concept that is relevant to consumerism is “simplifying desires” (Zsolnai, 2007). Buddhist ethics suggests “not to multiply but to simplify our desires [...] it is wise to try to reduce one’s desires” (Zsolnai, 2007, p.148). This idea can be seen from the fact that the consumers in this study engage in voluntary simple living (see section 6.4.2 for further discussion).

From the Buddhist perspective on ethical consumption, it can be said that Buddhist teachings or *Dhamma* guide the way people live their lives. To ensure adherence to their morals and moral behaviour, the consumers use practices such as the five precepts and the middle way in almost every aspect of their lives, including their consumption choices. This can be seen as prescribed methods for Buddhists to achieve wisdom and happiness. However, it is quite difficult to exactly translate Buddhist ethical teachings to any kind of Western ethics approaches (i.e. normative ethics, descriptive ethics, or meta-ethics). This does not mean that normative and descriptive ethics are not valuable, but

what it means in this thesis is that Buddhist ethics should be understood on its own terms. With Buddhist ethics, consumers experience with ethical consumption through Buddhist path (that is distinctive), and this can be claimed that their consumption behaviour is in line with the path of morality, mediation, and wisdom.

The core concepts of Buddhism are discussed here in relation to ethics and consumption. Different contexts of ethical consumption are detailed and discussed in the broader context of religiosity in section 6.4. To some extent, Buddhist ethics and one's lived experiences also give meanings to ethical consumption. This allows the study to address the meanings associated with ethical consumption through the self.

6.2.2 Ethical consumption symbolising sacred meanings and social meanings

The rationales when individuals make decisions on consumption are affected by the meanings that the type of product or the particular kind of consumption holds in itself. Ethical consumption has multiple meanings in which it provides some meaningful values to consumers, both privately and publicly. This in turn makes ethical consumption different from other kinds of consumption. From the findings, the current study suggests that ethical consumption is a means of creating consumption meanings that are “things that are designed or discovered to be supremely important [...] link consumer to one another and to nature and family or those offering emotional benefits” as sacred meanings; and things that allow consumers to be connected socially as social meanings (Arnould et al., 2004, p.129). In short, the sacred meanings convey a significant personal or

private meaning whereas the social meanings involves in a shared or public meaning.

The participants in this study reveal the social concerns within ethical consumption through the self. These individuals sometimes develop emotional involvement during their decisions on ethical and unethical products. Since, as mentioned in the study, the individual's ethics derives from Buddhist ethics and the inner (moral) self regarding ethical consumption, it appears to be related to a sacred meaning (Arnould et al., 2004, p.129) applying to "things that are designed or discovered to be supremely important". This refers to products that are able to link consumers to one another or family or other emotional benefits (i.e. non-tortured animals, happiness, healthier family for organic food). *Ploynatda*, for example, described that when she uses fairtrade and organic products, it gives her "happiness" as she knows that she is helping others in the process.

Ethical consumption that is related to some religious values in the Thai context also brings a sacred meaning to individuals. Most participants indicated that consuming ethically is similar to merit-making. In this belief, ethical consumption goes beyond the social benefits that the participants might give to society; it reflects one's personal values and beliefs that have shaped the self. In the context of voluntary simplicity, ethical consumption holds the idea of the "middle path" or "moderation" taught in Buddhism. *Panya* stated that he has tried and practiced the middle path through the way in which he consumes moderately and lives simply. Similarly, *Krittapak*, who has identified religion as her "spiritual anchor", expresses herself by consuming less meat so as to avoid killing or harming animals, one of the Buddha's five precepts or codes of conduct. Ethical

consumption in this sense, therefore, is a means of creating private meanings for the self and serving personal values and beliefs; in short, it has sacred meanings.

In addition to ethical consumption that coordinates with the inner, moral self and sacred meanings, to some extent it conveys social meanings to consumption. In the current study there is seen to be a reflexive relationship between social interaction and ethical consumption. According to Arnould et al. (2004, p.132), reflexivity within a consumer society context is defined as when: “people intentionally communicate statements about who they are, what groups they identify with, and those from which they are different primarily through consumer goods. Others tend to see what people consume as expression of who those people are.” This means that the ethical products used among the participants in the current study enable them to express who they are and at the same time to whom they are attached socially.

Individuals use ethical products (e.g. non-animal testing products, fairtrade products, organic products, copyrighted products) or have a simple life so as to express social concerns to respond to, for example “we don’t need to harm them just for the sake of our beauty” (*Umapon*); “I use things that don’t destroy natural resources and it’s also good for our world” (*Krittapak*); “it has made the world a better place so I normally love to buy fairtrade goods” (*Ploynatda*). It can be seen that social benefits have exerted a strong influence on ethical consumption and product decisions. In other words, consuming fairtrade product conveys concerns about the third world and fairness, just as non-animal testing products express concerns for animal welfare. In terms of social meanings, this implies that these individuals could be associated with the

environment and the society in which they are living and that they have shared personal experiences. *Pichaed* admitted that “to make an ethical consuming decision it needs to serve what I want and what society is asking for”. *Krittapak* also explained that because of a similar lifestyle between her and her friends, she feels no need to use or spend on luxury things: “we have a simple life [...] we do not like going out just for shopping, spending all our money, just not like that.”

From this, it can be argued that a product or means of consumption that holds values beyond itself, allowing some emotional involvement and social recognition, can strongly encourage individuals to engage in that particular form of consumption. In the case of ethical consumption, the participants have experienced feelings of being responsible, happy and accepted within themselves and among their groups. They are more likely to value the meanings of experiences rather than products, and these are the values derived from sacred and social meanings.

One of the recognised shared values of sacred meanings and social meanings regarding the ethical consumption context is the relationship with the self. In the study ethical consumption carries sacred meanings through the inner self whereas social meanings is developed more through the ideal self as well as the moral (self) identity. The moral identity in this case constructs the attributes of oneself that are different from those people in the society who do not concern about morals. Moreover, with respect to meanings attached to ethical consumption in relation to the notion of self, consumers are able to maintain or enhance their private self (through sacred meanings) and also express their public self within society (through social meanings). In most cases, ethical

consumption gives the private self feelings of happiness, pride, and fulfilment among Thai consumers, whereas the public self involves being a better person and greater social acceptance.

In particular, in some cases, there are conflicts between the person's private and public self. The tension within the self is even leveraged by violating religious codes of conduct (i.e. religious teachings, dhamma). For example, *Krittapak* describes that although she has tried to live simply and be more self-reliant, she still has to live in the competing and materialistic society. In this society, people are expected to have a stable social status and live a sophisticated life. This sometimes entails challenges for *Krittapak* to cope with the expectations and sudden desires of her own. This finding reveals that in order to suppress the desires and deal with tensions between the actual (true) self and the public self, Thai consumers usually use religion (i.e. Buddhist teachings) and subjective rationales.

Thus, it is apparent that the self-concept is revealed across the interview conversations in relation to its impacts and importance when the individuals reflect on their consuming behaviour. Next, the discussion highlights the notion of the self in relation to how individuals engage in ethical consumption.

6.3 Ethical consumption and self-concept

The notion of self is such a crucial concept in marketing as it reflects "who we are" (e.g. Belk, 1988), "we are what we buy" (Cutright et al., 2013). Referring to how self-concept is defined, one mostly used to explain the theory of self is from Rosenberg (1979, p. 7) in that it is "the totality of the individual's thoughts and

feelings, having reference to himself as an object". Extending the self theory from Rosenberg (1979), this thesis posits self-concept along the continuum between internal and external values, giving the self more flexible to experience and interact with situational or social contexts. From the literature, self-concept and other self-related elements (e.g. self-image, self-identity) have been extensively studied in terms of their relationship to a consumer domain (e.g. Ross, 1971; Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; Abe et al., 1996; Hogg and Garrow, 2003; Karanika and Hogg, 2010). However, limited evidence has been found on the notion of the self within the ethics and consumption context. This thesis attempts to reflect on consumers' self-concept to more fully understand self experiences and ethics in the context of ethical consumption. Thus, the self is explored with respect to both psychological and social influences, in which engaging in ethical consumption is a means to communicate moral meanings to the self and people in the society (i.e. based on concepts of symbolism and self-image congruence). Overall, with respect to the self-concept and ethical consumption, this study found that it relates to the inner self, the possible selves and social interactions as well as the self-motives.

Based on the findings of the self manifested in ethical consumption, a positive self is an outcome of such consuming behaviour. Among the participants, the positive self is inferred in different consumption contexts as, for example, "being different from others", "good, ethical person", "responsible person", "being self-reliant", "unselfishness", "satisfied person" and "being proud of myself". These positive views of the self are considered as the "desired self" (Markus and Nurius, 1986) that encourages individuals to behave and consume ethically. It should be noted that the current study considers the desired self distinctively from the ideal self as the desired self is related more to external influence to

what oneself and the society desire or accept for certain types of self. However, both the desired self and the ideal self are perceived to project the “wanted” feeling of the self. In this study the positive aspects of the self are identified through different contexts of ethical consumption by stating: “I feel like I’m taking part in helping our world [...] I’m proud of myself being one of the ethical people [...] Doing this makes me feel good [...] It makes me different” (*Ploynatda*); “I feel good when I walk into a music shop, a legal one, and pay for something” (*Pichaed*); “[...] feeling satisfied with what I have and trying to be more self-reliant” (*Umapon*); “Normally, when I choose something that can help others and our society, I feel better, better than when I’m using those other things [...] Maybe they are my happiness [...] I feel very glad and proud of myself” (*Krittapak*); “I’m not greedy to have this and that, just being self-sufficient [...] I feel secure because I balance my life” (*Panya*). These statements support the notion of Karanika and Hogg (2010) that consumption activities are valued as they project consumers’ desired selves. As such, “being different from others” is a crucial self-concept that *Ploynatda* uses to refer to herself when consuming ethically. This process of recognising and being recognised creates a unique sense of self, leading to the desired self, and also enhances self-esteem.

In addition to the positive self, there are some negative emotions stated in the conversations in which individuals reject unethical consumption behaviour as they would rather engage in ethical consumption. These negative emotions include feelings of shame and guilt. Such emotions relate to the concept of “avoidance of a negative self-state” (Luce, 1998). Also, it is interesting to point out that the negative emotions experienced from unethical phenomena could lead the individual to the condition of the “undesired self”. Within the

consumption context, the undesired self then could act as a negative impulse to unethical behaviour and a positive impulse to ethical behaviour. It should be noted that negative emotions are described in particular life-related circumstances (e.g. animal testing products, living food, killing animals for meat). The negative emotions emerged from the conversations through self-expression, for instance: "I just can't stand to see those poor innocent animals being mistreated" (*Umapon*); "For me, it feels like it's not necessary, sometimes it's too much and I feel bad about it. I feel sorry for people today" (*Krittapak*); "I barely ate them (pets). I feel awful" (*Ladda*); "I feel it's unfair for them (animals) just for that purpose (cosmetic testing)" (*Yingyot*). These negative emotions in turn lead to the undesired self by which the individuals respond to those emotions by engaging in ethical consumption, whilst they avoid the potential undesired selves that could happen if they consume unethically. This is in line with the concept of avoidance of a negative self-state that previous empirical studies have found with a significant relationship between the undesired self and consumption experiences (e.g. Banister and Hogg, 2004; Hogg and Banister, 2001; Karanika and Hogg, 2010; Wilk, 1997). According to Hogg and Banister (2001, p.74), the undesired self is avoided to the extent that "what a person is afraid of becoming, or more specifically an individual's undesired or un-ideal self, is of particular relevance where they imbue products with negative meanings". From this, it can be implied that the meanings conveyed by the negative or undesired self is significant to the person. It could be that the individuals use the undesired self as a reference point or "implicit or normative standard" (Miller, 1999) to evaluate the self and distance themselves from tapping into the undesired self.

With respect to the notions of the desired and undesired self, Markus and Nurius (1986) claimed these as “possible selves”. From this viewpoint, the implication is that ethical consumption can somehow portray one’s desired self-concept and prevent one’s undesired self-concept. Thus, the interrelationship between desired and undesired self and ethical consumption was found in the current study, which can also be related to the positive and negative aspects of self. Both the desired self and undesired self are considered as part of the processes of the self and ethical consumption, as included in Figure 6.2. This in turn is considered as a kind of symbolic consumption, by which participants use ethical consumption practices to express and symbolise their personal ethics, a sense of self and their self-identity. The evidence of symbolism through ethical consumption can be clearly seen in the cases of *Krittapak* and *Ploynatda*, who claimed that ethical consumption is their “happiness”. In this case, it could be implied that as an ethical consumer who relates the self to ethical concerns, ethical consumption can represent a “happy” feeling for the person. Another case is when *Ploynatda* described the purchase of fairtrade coffee as “merit-making” as it helps other people. Also, it is interesting to point out that symbolic consumption links to stereotypes of associated product-user imagery (Sirgy et al., 1997). In this study, the user images are inferred in ethical consumption/product users, for example: “put myself in their shoes” (*Ploynatda*), “easy, kind person” (*Krittapak*), “not taking advantage of others” (*Umapon*), “not greedy, self-sufficient” (*Panya*), “not cheating” (*Pichaed*), “helpful” (*Sameujai*), “sympathetic” (*Ladda*), “not exploiting” (*Vaivat*), “harmless” (*Yingyot*), “beneficent” (*Nittaya*). These images of ethical product users support aspects of the positive or desired self. Therefore, it can be claimed that these individuals’ possible selves (positive or desired self and negative or undesired

self) function as incentives to strive for ethical consumption behaviour. From this standpoint, the self evolves through interaction processes of social interaction, symbolism and one's inner self.

Importantly, it is interesting to highlight that although the actual self and the ideal self are identified in the study regarding ethical consumption experiences, the phenomenon under study incorporates the multidimensional self into its nature as well as the emerging concepts of possible selves (including positive or desired self, negative or undesired self, actual self, ideal self) in order to construct the overall sense of self. In this regard, Cantor et al. (1986) suggest that the self can be viewed as a dynamic structure involving multidimensional self. The dynamic self-structure enables the surfacing of self-relevant information in terms of goals, aspirations, motives, fears and threats (Markus and Nurius, 1986). In this case, apart from Markus and Nurius's (1986) suggestion, the self is drawn from one's lived experiences and morality.

Furthermore, emphasising the notion of self in ethical consumption suggests that "self-esteem" and "self-consistency" as self-motives (Epstein, 1980) play an important role in the phenomenon under study. Even though these self-motives have a relationship to the self and consumption behaviour, there is some distinction in that self-esteem aims at enhancing self-concept, whereas self-consistency aims at behaving consistently with the view of oneself (Sirgy, 1982). Next, self-esteem and self-consistency are discussed to the extent that they interact with one's self and consuming behaviour in the ethical context. The impacts of these self-motives are fruitful and multifaceted subjects to be elaborated.

6.3.1 Self-esteem affecting actual self, ideal self and moral enhancement

Although Sirgy (1982) insisted that self-esteem enhances one's self-concept, the current study found that it involves both the actual self and the ideal self. From one specific standpoint, self-esteem is maintained through one's actual sense of self, or the actual self. There are the personal moral attributes of, for instance, "honesty", "sincerity", "good thinking" and "sympathy" that individuals hold and to which their behaviour corresponds through patterns of ethical consumption. It could be claimed that individuals express themselves in accordance with the actual self while attempting to sustain their self-esteem. With ethical concerns, individuals engage in ethical consumption behaviour as a way of moral self-expression, aligning with the concept of self and self-esteem. In referring to "self-expression", much of consumer research has insisted on its relationship to consumer preference and choices (e.g. Belk, 1988; Richins, 1994). As individuals use ethical consumption to express the self and their lifestyle, to some extent, it provides symbolic benefits for them.

From another perspective, self-esteem motivates individuals to enhance a conception of self, as seen in other studies (e.g. Rosenberg, 1979; Banister and Hogg, 2004; Power, 1997). This study extends the influence of self-esteem to the ethical context and reveals that ethical consumption conveys positive meanings to an individual, resulting in the ideal self. This ideal self allows the individual to enhance self-esteem by being a "better person". From this viewpoint, the ideal self is related to self-enhancement that is found, for example: "So, I could be in a better position [...] I feel better" (*Krittapak*); "makes me feel more relieved [...] helps to heighten people's ethical level, and mine too"

(*Pichaed*); “each day I am a better person [...] being even better and better” (*Ploynatda*).

Furthermore, in the current study it should be noted that self-enhancement occurs in the process when ethical consumption is recognised to be preferable and moral behaviour by the self as well as public. These findings corroborate the ideas of Grubb and Grathwohl (1967, p.25), who highlighted that “while self-enhancement results from a personal, internal, intra-action process, the effect on the individual is ultimately dependent upon the product’s being a publicly-recognized symbol.” This also implies that meanings attached to ethical consumption, whether derived from oneself or from the social context, can draw attention and reaction from individuals whose self-concept places a high value on ethical attributes.

Referring to both the actual self and the ideal self, the self-esteem motive is consistent with the views of Gecas (1982, p.21), who pointed out that “self-enhancement emphasized growth, expansion, and increasing one’s self-esteem, while self-maintenance focuses on not losing what one has”. With respect to different aspects of self found in this study (i.e. the actual self, the ideal self, the desired self, the undesired self), this reveals that there are four emerging motivational orientations of self-esteem: “strive for morality and rightness”, “reflect one’s positive or desired self”, “neglect negative or undesired self” and “uphold ethical belief”. As has been found, moral self-maintenance and moral self-enhancement encourage individuals to experience ethical consumption. Hence, this study views self-esteem as the psychological motivational determinant that affects one’s self (whether it is the actual self, the

ideal self, the desired self, and the undesired self) and one's life goals, including ethics.

In addition, the self-esteem motive is considered to be an independent factor of a person's behaviour (Gecas, 1982), apart from its motivational effect. Crandall (1973, p.45) indicated that self-esteem is related to "almost everything at one time or another." As found in the current study, this shows that self-esteem affects mental condition, attitudes, persuadability, interpersonal attraction and moral behaviour. Also, it could be stated that the participants (ethical consumers) tend to have high self-esteem associated with the desired self, which in turn motivates them to aim at moral self-maintenance and moral self-enhancement. People with high self-esteem are even claimed to have such favourable attributes as "confidence and independence" (Rosenberg, 1965), "creativity and flexibility" (Coopersmith, 1967) and low possibility of "deviance" (Kaplan, 1975). So, with high self-esteem underpinning the self, individuals hold these 'healthy' personal traits; for example, *Umapon* wants to be "self-reliant" by engaging in voluntary simplicity. So, ethical consumption behaviour is an outcome of maintaining and enhancing self-esteem, as in many cases when consumers use copyrighted products, non-animal testing products, OTOP, and fairtrade products.

Turning to another element of self-motives, self-consistency is also associated with the self and ethical consumption practices. To capture the overall self-concept of the participants, it seems that they experience such consumption by not only intending to develop or improve self-esteem, but also by deciding on things corresponding to the sense of self. The next section discusses self-consistency.

6.3.2 Self-consistency affecting moral self-expression and actual self

The findings of the current study indicate that there is an interrelationship between self-consistency, one's self-concept and ethical consumption behaviour. Even though some empirical studies have indicated a weaker impact of the consistency motive (e.g. Jones, 1973; Gergen, 1968) on the self compared to the self-esteem motive, this study found that it had some relevance. As a result, the current study recognises that self-consistency is related to substantive self elements: identities and perception of self.

The idea of self-consistency is in line with the way Epstein (1973) views the self-concept as a "self-theory", in which it "seeks to maintain a coherent view of itself in order to operate effectively in the world" (Gecas, 1982, p.23). As found in the current study, all participants rationalise their ethical consumption behaviours as to be related to concepts of self, including identity and self-perception, to those practices. Based on the trait school of thought on the self-concept, it could be seen that the self-consistency motive can motivate individuals to project the actual self, such as being harmless, kind, helpful and sympathetic, through ethical consumption. This viewpoint is insisted on by Foote (1951), who argued that people are motivated to take action with respect to their values and norms through the identities they are holding. Stryker (1980) also made a crucial point on this in saying that "the higher the salience of an identity within the self-concept, the greater is its motivational significance" (Gecas, 1982, p.24; Stryker and Serpe, 1982). From the findings, it seems that the self and identities are significant and impact on individuals when they decide on ethical consumption. Moreover, it is interesting to note that to maintain one's sense of self consistent with one's behaviour helps individuals to reduce self-

conflict and mental stress. For example, *Umapon* pointed out that she is an “animal lover” and “cannot stand to see those poor innocent animals being mistreated”. So, having or using non-animal tested cosmetics is one approach that can satisfy her needs and respond to the self simultaneously.

In addition, it is worth noting that the self-consistency motive is relevant to contextual circumstances. In some cases participants are unable to be consistent with the concepts of self, as when there is some mismatch between the inner self and desire. This can be seen through the context of voluntary simplicity, in which sometimes the individual (*Krittapak*) still wants to spend although the inner self holds an idea of self-reliance or self-sufficiency. In this case, the consistency motive might not act effectively as a motivator for the individual to consume ethically. It seems possible that other psychologically influential factors, such as the moral self (section 6.3.3) and self-monitoring (section 6.5), can help protect self-consistency, a sense of self and moral behaviour.

6.3.3 Moral self and moral self-identity

Extending Wylie’s (1961) and Reed’s (2002) concept of the phenomenological self into the ethics and consumption context, it is apparent that the self is developed through ethical consumption, underpinned by the moral self (derived from psychological and social self-influences) and involved in constructing the moral self-identity. In this case, the moral self addresses the issue of what associates the self-concept with the context of ethical consumption and consumer behaviour.

Previous empirical studies focusing on moral action have also shared an important view of the moral self (Blasi, 1984; Aquino and Reed, 2002; Reed and

Aquino, 2003; Hardy, 2006; Reed et al., 2007; Stets and Carter, 2011). To further illustrate the notion of the moral self, one explanation for this is rooted in “identity theory” (Stryker, 1980; Stryker and Burke, 2000), which facilitates this study in contextualising the moral self and outlining the individual’s moral identity. According to identity theory, an individual’s identity refers to the categorisation of the self, in terms of its role, and meanings and expectations associated with that role (Stryker, 1980), and probably through social structure (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980). These meanings and expectations then form a set of internal identity standards that in turn guide behaviour over a full range of being a good or bad person (Burke and Tully, 1977; Burke, 1991; Stets and Burke, 2000). Moreover, Blasi’s (1984, 1993) view on the self is in line with the concept of the “actual self” in the current study, wherein an “identity” is at the centre of one’s being that is called the ‘essential self’. Based on this perspective, the study identifies some (moral) identities linked to the moral self within individuals. It can be seen in the cases when the participants show a lack of greed, the attitude of “helping” others, selflessness, kindness, generosity, sufficiency and sympathy that can be explained by the moral self through these moral traits. However, it should be pointed out that there are varied identities among the individuals. For example, the individuals indicate (from self-portraits in the findings chapter, section 4.2.1) simplicity (*Krittapak*), rightness (*Pichaed*), generosity (*Nittaya*), sufficiency (*Panya*), responsibility (*Ladda*) and sympathy (*Ploynatda*) as their core identities, suggesting “the deepest principle” (Stets and Carter, 2011, p.194) that, in turn, impacts their lives. The variation found in these moral identities relates to the moral self, which influences life purposes and ultimately one’s moral goals.

In addition, regarding the dimensions of the self (the actual self and the ideal self), moral self and identity link to the concepts of self-consistency (when the self aligns to moral identity) and self-enhancement (when moral identity serves the desired meanings for oneself). Furthermore, where the individual places a high value on the moral self and the moral identity and he or she can behave according to that value; and with that it triggers positive emotions (such as feeling happy and satisfied) to the self. On the other hand, when there is inconsistency between the moral self and moral identity (what he/she likes to be/to do) and one's behaviour, negative emotions are recognised (such as guilt, sadness and unhappiness).

Arguably, in the ethical consumption context of Blasi's (1984) moral self and moral functioning, the current study recognises that individuals (consumers) do not always consciously or deliberately consume ethically as the ethical value is already embedded within the self, opposed to Blasi's assumption. Some of the participants, for instance, claimed: "It quite automatically reminds me. Even when I just see the CP logo, I would say no to it. It happens automatically" (*Umapon*); "For living food, it happens quite automatically because I feel bad about buying that" (*Ladda*). What is also recognised is that "emotion" plays a significant role in the intuitive response to ethical and unethical consumption decisions. Therefore, this study advances Blasi's (1984) study and others (Aquino and Reed, 2002; Reed et al., 2007) by including "emotion" as one of the influential factors in the moral self and ethical consumption behaviour in a conceptual framework, shown in Figure 6.2. Moreover, it is vital to emphasise that the self acts as a moral entity, showing some concern (consciously and intuitively) for good and bad deeds through consumption experiences.

Another important finding is that when moral identity is central to the self, it could be implied that morality is significant to an individual. This claim supports the empirical study of Aquino and Reed (2002), which introduced “moral identity salience” and demonstrated its relationship to moral identity and moral behaviour. In short, it is moral salience that provides the rationale for different accounts that individuals hold about morality.

It could be argued that some people might consider personal moral attributes to be as important as their core identity, whereas others might consider those attributes as unimportant values. In fact, this is related to moral salience within the self. This moral identity salience corroborates the notion that “individuals may have similar moral beliefs but differ in how essential morality is to their self-identities” (Vitell et al., 2009, p.602). In the current study, it was found that the participants (who can be called “ethical consumers”) tend to have high moral salience and positive emotion to morals and ethics, which has led them to pay attention to ethical concerns, moral identities as well as ethical consumption. In other words, it could be stated that moral salience can make one person different from another and can give that person a “unique” identity. As revealed in the findings, moral identities lead the individual to “be different from others” (e.g. *Sameujai* and *Ploynatda*). Moreover, moral salience together with positive emotion to ethical practice or negative emotion to unethical practice can even promote ethical consumption behaviour.

Furthermore, referring back to identity theory (Stryker, 1980), the self is viewed from multiple self-dimensions, where there are different identities involved. So it is worth stressing that moral salience enables one (moral) identity to be more salient than others (Stryker, 1980; Stets and Carter, 2011). Other studies have

referred to this salient identity as one's working self-concept, which is a subset of self-views that are temporarily simulated in a situation (Markus and Kunda, 1986). The concept of the working self also emerged from the findings, as one of the participants admitted that although she tends to eat less meat and mainly vegetables, but sometimes she just cannot help to eat it. However, she highlights that she has tried to control herself and this happens once in a while (*Krittipak*). Another situation was when *Kritiipak* describes herself as simple and self-reliant, though she confessed that she sometimes has a feeling of "wanting" to purchase unnecessary things. However, moral salience and the moral self can help guide her behaviour to align with her desired moral identity.

In addition to the internal aspects of self and moral salience, it was found that external influences also affect the self. In this way, social influence and social interaction are associated with the self-ethics relationship in the study. Having both related internal and external influences enables the current study to explore more complete aspects of the self in relation to ethical consumption.

6.3.4 Social interaction, the self and personal ethics

"A portion of the total perceptual field gradually becomes differentiated as the self [...] as a result of the interaction with the environment, and particularly as a result of evaluational interaction with others, the structure of the self is formed – an organized, fluid, but consistent conceptual pattern of perceptions of characteristics and relationships of the "I" or the "me" together with values attached to these concepts" (Hall and Lindsay, 1957, p.483).

Adopting a phenomenological paradigm of the self, this study initially views the self-concept through both intrinsic and extrinsic factors relating to ethical consumption behaviour. Also, it was indicated that during the interviews the

participants reflected on themselves regarding the self and ethical consumption. This suggests that they had been involved in a process of “reflexivity”, which refers to ‘the act of an individual subject directing awareness towards itself, reflecting upon its own practices, preferences and even the process of reflection itself’ (Adams and Raisborough, 2008, p.1168). This claim further links to the notion of self pointed out by Gecas (1982, p.3), that it is an output of reflexive activity by which the individual has the perception of him- or herself as a “physical, social, and spiritual or moral being”. So, from the reflexive project of each individual, this supports the current study in the way that it includes social influence (as found) in one of its substantive factors relating to the phenomenon under research.

With social influence, the findings showed that significant others (including family, peers and role models) have an impact on one’s concept of self, moral self and ethical consumption behaviour. On the other hand, this indicates that individuals use ethical products or ethical consumption as a means to symbolise their moral self and communicate with the significant others. From this viewpoint, the interrelationship between the self, society, and ethical consumption can be found, as presented in Figure 6.3. In particular, the self is seen in this study as an ongoing reflexive project, in which it is experienced and constructed through meanings of ethical consumption, resulting in moral images of the self from past and future, and that moderated by the anticipated responses of society and significant others. Theoretically, the findings are in line with Rosenberg’s (1979) social comparison principle, which refers to the extent to which the self is evaluated by comparing oneself to significant others. In this case, social experiences are involved in this interaction process with the self. Also, it should be noted that the significant others whom the participants take

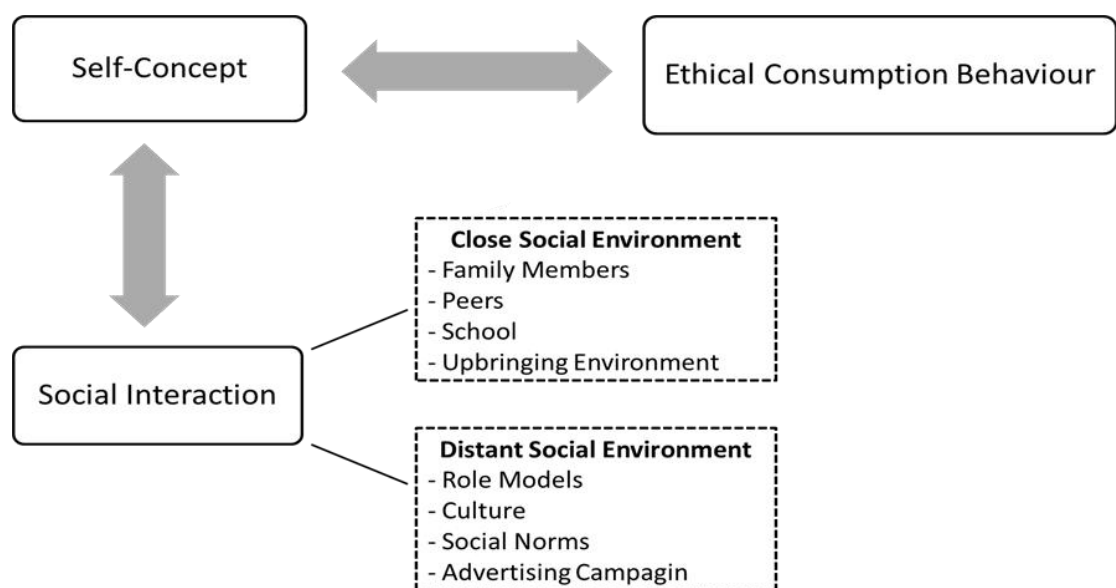
into account when they make ethical decisions are considered as a reference group for them.

Thus, it could be classified that social influence interacts with the self and individuals' ethical behaviour in two ways: the close social environment and the distant social environment (Figure 6.3). The close social environment includes family members, friends, school and upbringing environment, which reveals a strong interrelationship between the self and ethical behaviour. This is because the individuals have been familiar with this environment, in which it shapes how they perceive themselves and their surroundings, as well as their moral values. On the other hand, the distant social environment refers to the influences of role models, culture, social norms and advertising campaigns. Surprisingly, the distant social environment was found to have indirect impacts on the self and ethical consumption behaviour, as the individuals indicated that it is a matter of what they actually feel, however, the significant others to some extent can make them want to act accordingly. Also, social norms and campaigns are claimed to be too remote from them.

Although close and distant environments are distinct in term of the degree of its impacts on ethical consumption, people, to some extent, use these environments as a moral reference or a reference group. With the reference group using as good and bad examples, it can be seen that individuals have utilised the reference group through comparison, learning process, and behavioural benchmarking. In the comparison process, *Ladda*, for example, who compares herself with friends as a form of self-evaluation, stated: "if this is good, I will keep using or doing it and if this is bad, I ignore it." The learning process exists in the living environment: *Panya* noticed that people around him

get sick easily and he learns from their (eating) lifestyle in order to improve his life and people in his society through organic consumption. As a behavioural benchmark, *Umapon* imitates the behaviour of her father and mother as a good example to encourage her to consume more organically and to have a simple lifestyle. Furthermore, the outcomes of these social influences are related to moral judgement and behaviour among the participants. The behaviour, in this case, actually aims at “social approval”, which to some extent supports such accepted and ethical behaviours.

Figure 6.3: A conceptual framework of social interaction and ethical consumption



Another crucial point recognised in this study is that significant others also provide meanings to ethical consumption. These findings corroborate the previous study on self-concept and significant others of Grubb and Stern (1971). Thus, the study supports the view of “product use as a symbol of consumers’ interaction with significant others” (Grubb and Stern, 1971, p.382). From this perspective, it could be implied that the participants use significant

others, such as family members, friends and even role models, as a source of ethical approval that ensures them good deeds and moral behaviour, or “should be” behaviour. In particular, the close social environment is viewed as offering more trusted social approval for moral behaviour as well as consumption practices. However, it should be underlined that individuals are more likely to accept the meanings given by significant others or reference groups that are relevant to the self-concept (Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Childers and Rao, 1992; Bearden and Etzel, 1982). For instance, *Umapon* perceives herself as having an “easy lifestyle” and she considers Saharat Sangkapreecha, an actor and a singer, as an idol who shares her values of simple living and being a nature lover. These shared values are in line with *Umapon*'s personal values and in turn it is the way not only to express herself, but also to create or enhance her self-identity (McCracken, 1989). It can thus be suggested that the individual interacts with others through associated meanings that are relevant to the self, wherein the meanings attached to ethical consumption are used as information sources or references to guide decisions on certain consumption behaviours. In particular, a possible explanation for this interrelationship between the significant others and the self is that the individual tends to comply with these people or social referents for moral behaviour where there are similar motivational (e.g. being self-reliant, to live more fairly) and emotional (e.g. guilt, shame, pride, happy) aspects of the self. As a result, one's personal ethics or moral self is also affected by social interaction. This interaction of society and the self is consistent with the study of Cherrier (2007), who demonstrated that consumers' ethical decisions involve not only themselves, but societal information processes.

Relating the self to social interaction (including social influence and significant others), social influence and significant others seem to have an impact only if these social values contribute shared meanings and a similar image that the individual is holding of him- or herself. This then links to a concept of self and product/consumption congruency (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; Sirgy, 1982); and that is crucial to discuss in terms of how ethical consumption helps to facilitate images of the self and certain consumption.

6.3.5 Congruence of self-image and ethics

Taking the self-concept into the consumer behaviour domain, one important concept that has been extensively mentioned in empirical studies is the congruence between self-image and product image (e.g. Bellenger et al., 1976; Heath and Scott, 1998; Quester et al., 2000; Helgeson et al., 2004; Hosany and Martin, 2012). There is evidence that ensures associations between the self, product symbols and consumer behaviour (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987). However, in the context of ethics and ethical consumption, the extent to which one's self-image is congruent with the image of ethical product/ethical consumption is still understudied.

Theoretically, the notion of "self-congruity" refers to a concept that "links the psychological constructs of an individual self-concept with the symbolic value of goods purchased in the marketplace" (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967, p.22). As discussed earlier, ethical consumption is related to symbolism. With respect to the congruence of one's self-image and product/consumption image, "image" is central to the self-product interaction process. This highlights Parker's (2009) claim that image is a "bridge" that connects individuals to a brand, product or means of consumption. Self-image in the ethical consumption context is seen

as the image that an individual has of him- or herself through morality, reflecting the moral self-image.

The current study found that all participants claimed themselves to have ethics, in which a moral image of oneself links to the ethical image associated with ethical consumption. Thus, this study names a phenomenon of bridging images between the self and ethics as “self–ethics congruency”. Literally, the finding in this study reflects on “we are what we have” (e.g. Feirstein, 1986; Rosenbaum, 1972) and “we are what we reject” (Fournier, 1998b, p.89; Hogg and Savolainen, 1998). This factual quote can be applied to the context of ethical consumption in that we are ethical, so we consume ethically; and we are ethical, so we avoid consume unethically. Moreover, it should be highlighted that it is a two-way impact on the self and ethical consumption. That is, individuals choose and consume ethical product as it represents who they are and offer what they want; and they infer their selves through the meaning attached to that product. On the other hand, ethical consumption becomes part of themselves or identities by constructing the moral identity and enhancing the moral self. Individuals sometimes even use ethical consumption to view the self of others. Ultimately, the self and ethical consumption are closely interrelated in exchanging their meanings and values.

Regarding the dimensions of the self (the actual self and ideal self), it could be said that one’s self-image matches the ethical image of ethical consumption, showing actual self–ethics congruency and ideal self–ethics congruency. These congruencies imply that ethical consumption is experienced when the actual self or the ideal self is in line with the image in the ethical consumption context. These results are related to the ideas generated in the previous study of self–

image congruency by Ross (1971, p.38), which indicated that “people purchase a product or brand only if these things are consistent with, enhance, or in some way fit well with the conception they have of themselves.” For example, from the study *Panya* considers himself as a simple and nature-loving person (the actual self) who carries a similar image of such ethical consumption, claimed as environmentally friendly. Another example is when *Ploynatda* states that she wants to be a “better person” (ideal self) to help more people, in which ethical consumption (for her) is seen to represent “help” that matches the self and her desire. As having both actual self–ethics congruency and ideal self–ethics congruency, this could suggest that individuals are mostly affected by their inner selves when considering ethical issues or morality. It is what they feel right or ethical, and it is a sense telling them to what they ought to be and ought to do. Individuals are more inclined to express their “intrinsic” self-identity through ethical consumption practices. In this way, self–ethics congruency represents value expression and the function of “me”–ethics integration. Nonetheless, to some extent the current study still takes social influences into account, promoting an extrinsic self–ethics congruency that affects an individual’s ethical consumption decisions. This can be seen when participants sometimes pay attention to social acceptance or the positive or desired self, being valued by society and significant others. Therefore, it could conceivably be underlined that self–ethics congruency encourages and strengthens decisions on ethical consumption, both implicitly and explicitly.

Thus, it can be concluded that individuals consume ethically not only for what this can offer them physically, but also for what it means to them and the way in which it helps them to develop an ethical self-image that is consistent with their actual self or ideal self. In the current study, it should also be emphasised that,

even though the moral self-image is congruent with the image of ethical product/ethical consumption, it is also affected by lived experiences, personal ethics and social interaction. In addition, “religiosity” has an impact on one’s morals and ethical decisions and behaviour, shaping the moral self, especially in the Thai consumer context.

6.4 Religiosity

Some issues regarding the influence of religiosity are discussed in sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2, particularly in terms of Buddhist ethics. In this section, religious influence is explored in a broader sense using the term “religiosity”. Specific contexts of ethical consumption that are affected by religiosity, including Buddhist ethics, are also highlighted. In examining the self and ethical consumption in the Thai context, the relationship between religiosity (through Buddhist ethics) and consumer morality must not be neglected. Thai people have been nurtured in a religious environment and in the context of religious beliefs. This can be seen from the stories and experiences that the participants in this study described. Most of the research participants are influenced by Buddhist culture, of which some of the Buddhist teachings highly impact their lives and, in turn, are closely related to contexts of ethical consumption, such as voluntary simplicity, little or no meat consumption, and use of non-animal testing products. Thus, looking at the impact of religiosity helps the current study to enhance understanding of the meanings of ethical consumption through the self, and specifically religious moral meanings. However, regardless of different specific religions, religion itself is integrated into one’s self and one’s perception of moral behaviour and ethics.

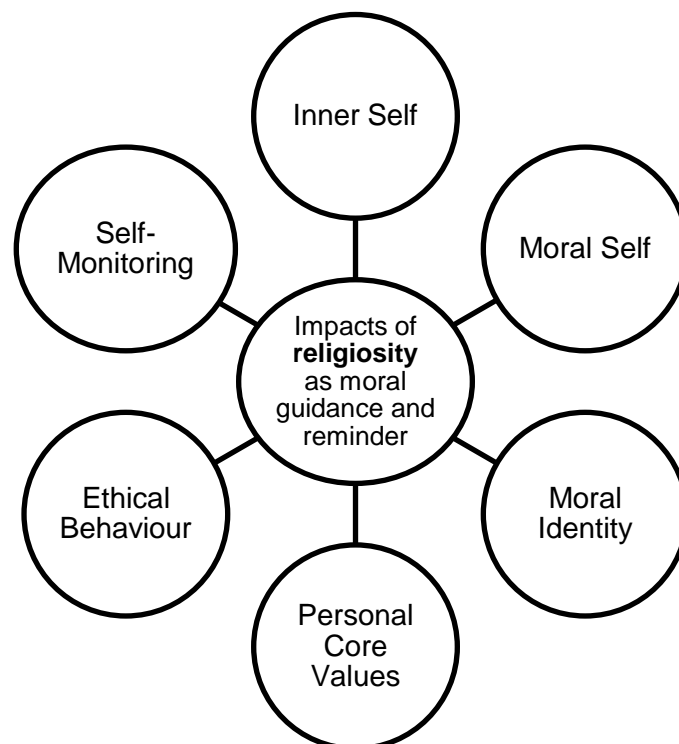
The current study found that Buddhist ethics impacts on an individual's ethical decisions and actions, which in turn affect a sense of self reflecting through a form of moral self. This religious effect, in this case, refers to the term "religiosity" as "a belief in God accompanied by a commitment to follow principles believed to be set by God" (Vitell, 2009, p.155; McDaniel and Burnett, 1990). Previous empirical studies have insisted on the relationship between religiosity and ethical behaviour as well as ethical judgement (e.g. Hunt and Vitell, 1993; Weaver and Agle, 2002; Vitell, 2009). This relationship is also seen from the findings; therefore the current study takes religiosity into account as a source of moral self and moral identity, influencing ethical consumption decisions and behaviour. The ethical consumption, in return, provides the individuals a means of adhering the religious beliefs and making merit (as taught in Buddhism and Christianity) whilst it serves moral values to the self. Furthermore, from the findings it can be claimed that religiosity impacts on individuals and their consumption by processes: religiosity and one's moral self as moral behavioural guidance and reminders, and religiosity as a philosophy for living. These processes are discussed further in the following sections.

6.4.1 Religiosity as moral behavioural guidance and reminder to the self

In this study, religiosity is relevant to one's morality as it guides and reminds an individual of morals and ethical behaviour. The role of religiosity as moral guidance and reminder and its relevant impacts on an individual are depicted in Figure 6.4. It is not surprising that most of the participants refer to religion as a source of morals and ethics. This could be because religion has gained high respect among the research participants, certainly in the Thai context. Moreover, the findings of the current study indicate that religiosity is central to

participants' perception of good or bad deeds and right or wrong behaviours. The self also plays its part in sustaining the moral integrity that an individual has fostered regarding religious beliefs and values. However, it should be noted that the self is not only related to personal morals, but also to social interaction, including significant others, social norms and upbringing and living environment. As compared to these social influences, this study reveals that religiosity is a solid background of moral action and judgement imprinted on one's inner self, moral self and personal moral meaning. This finding supports previous literature that emphasises religiosity as a stronger factor in a person's values than almost any other determinant (Huffman, 1988).

Figure 6.4: The impacts of religiosity as guidance and reminder on one's morals and behaviour



Some of the rationales for such a strong power of religion are that individuals consider religion as a trusted and reliable place for morality and ethics; and it is

the teachings that they have been taught to respect and follow, from the practice of which good results can be seen. For example, *Krittapak* even called religion her “spiritual anchor”, *Panya* linked it to his motto, *Sameujai* placed it in his subconscious, and others (e.g. *Ploynatda*, *Umapon*, *Ladda*) combined religious values in their lives, values that have passed down through generations. One extreme case of religiosity being tied to the moral self is when *Krittapak* claimed: “If I was born without having religion, that is, I would not have any ethics.” So as religion integrates with the inner self, ethical decisions and behaviours appear to be more intuitive (Vitell et al., 2005). This can be seen when *Vaivat* and *Ladda* instinctively rejected consuming live food.

Furthermore, religiosity conveys some “moral”, “good” and “positive” meanings to the self and especially to the self-identity. This evidence is supported by Walker and Pitts (1998), who suggested that religiosity is associated with morality in such a way that the traits of a moral person are merged closely with those of a very religious person. With respect to religiosity and the self in this study, it is apparent that religiosity is the link between one’s moral identity and ethical consuming behaviour. Given this relationship, religiosity is found to be an antecedent to one’s moral identity. This is shown when the participants describe themselves through Buddhist teachings as a “thoughtful self” and a more “conscious self” who consciously thinks before doing and cares more about others and social benefits as a whole. In this sense, the “thoughtful self” and “conscious self” are attributes of the moral identity, especially among Buddhists, as it can yield a good kamma (i.e. action, based on the law of kamma). This finding is consistent with the ideas of Weaver and Agle (2002), who pointed out that an individual’s behaviour is influenced by religious self-identity. Nevertheless, it should be underlined that engaging in ethical behaviour

is not only applied to a religious type of person, but is also experienced when the person is not religious, yet holds personal values that have some religious content. The moral identity is more appealing when religious values are in line with one's personal values, and when those personal values are even underpinned by the moral self.

Although Allport (1950) proposed two dimensions of religiosity, extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions, the current study found that the intrinsic role of religion appears to influence most of the participants' ethical consumption behaviour. This intrinsic role refers to "a strong internal commitment to religion as a part of one's everyday life" (Vitell et al., 2009, p.603). The findings show that religion (particularly Buddhism) was claimed to be part of their lives, through attitudes and lifestyles. This suggests the internalisation of the moral identity (Aquino and Reed, 2002) is more relevant to the individuals in this thesis. In Aquino and Reed's (2002, p.1427) study the notion of internalisation refers to the extent to which "the moral traits are central to the self-concept", by which it shows strong relationship of moral identity and ethical behaviour, for example, when students donate food. In short, religiosity and ethical consumption strive to be part of the inner self and to be more related to "subjective matters".

Further examination of one's self in relation to specific contexts of religiosity and "sin" (i.e. bad kamma) shows the crucial religious power based on Buddhism to prevent and control a person behaving unethically. The participants reported the negative feeling towards sin as they believed that it could cause negative consequences to them. It even shows that they pay attention to the fact that their *kamma* might be affected if they behave unethically. This is related to their Buddhist ethics (as discussed in section 6.2.1). This then guides their ethical

behaviour, such as doing no harm to animals; as a result, some participants choose to use products that do not threaten any animal life.

Thus, it could be claimed that “five precepts” of the Buddhist teachings have a strong influence on the participants (Thai consumers) in terms of personal ethics and ethical decisions. One of these five precepts states that “I undertake the rule of training to refrain from destroying living beings” (Mills, 1999, p.93), which was found to be the most relevant to the context of ethical consumption in this study. It guides the participants to, for instance, consume less meat (*Krittapak* and *Umapon*), consume no living food (*Ladda* and *Viavet*), try to be a vegetarian for a certain time (*Ladda* and *Umapon*) and use non-animal testing products (*Ploynatda*). It also should be noted that via Buddhist teachings or *Dhamma* (e.g. the five precepts), together with the law of *kamma*, ethical engagement among Thai consumers is enhanced. One clear point is that the concept of *kamma* from “bad” or “unethical” deeds directly affects Thai consumers’ sense of self, as they believe in rebirth. Therein, past and present actions are perceived to be able to pass through to the future life.

In addition to the guiding power of religiosity, it was found that religiosity to some extent acts as a reminder of one’s moral actions and ethical decisions (as discussed in section 5.1). The participants highlighted that religion makes them realise what they should do or should not do. In other words, religiosity has the ability to monitor oneself and one’s behaviour in accordance with religious teachings and beliefs. This then links to the concept of self-monitoring (as discussed in section 5.4).

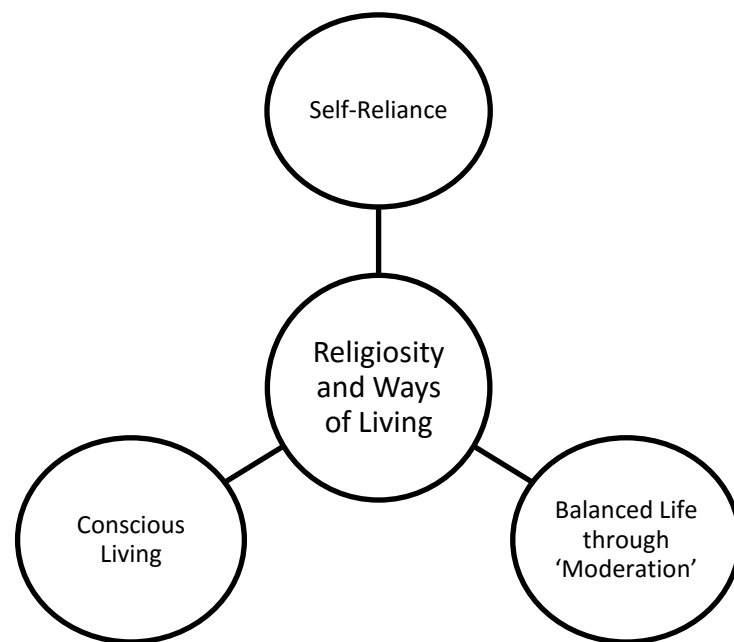
6.4.2 Religiosity as a healthier way of life

Religiosity affects many aspects of life for Thai people, such as mothering, family, love, occupation, social life and definitely consumption. To have healthy conditions for living and being a good Buddhist, Buddhism suggests that the person should follow the concept of “middle way” or “moderation” by not living an extreme life, focusing on tolerance, non-violence, respect for others and the spiritual equality of all human beings (Sood and Nasu, 1995). As was found in the study, participants emphasised being “self-reliant”, “self-sufficient”, having a “balanced life” and being “simple” in order to spend their lives in a more Buddhist way. This way of living is considered moral from the Buddhist perspective (as also discussed in section 6.2.1). Moreover, it is worth stressing that in the Thai consumer context religiosity extends the context of ethical consumption to a more conscious, simple and sufficient living. This links to the idea that religious moral codes encourage individuals to be more conscious and pursue conscious living (Szmigin et al., 2009). In this way, the individuals know what they are doing and exercise choices over the products they consume. The crucial points of how religiosity affects ways of life in the Thai context are also presented in Figure 6.5.

In particular, Buddhist ethics exerts the influence on Thai people’s lives to encourage them to comply with the concept of middle way. In the context of ethical consumption, voluntary simplicity is viewed as being able to serve the needs of self-sufficient people relating to the practice of the middle way. The participants tend to consume less and purchase only what is necessary. For example, *Panya* prefers not to use designer brands and merely says: “I’m a happy person living on earth by just having a simple life.” From this, it could be

argued not only that the individual has a simple life, but that he (*Panya*) is self-satisfied with the self-sufficient way of life. Religiosity, in this case, even creates a “happy” feeling when the individual follow the middle way of living (i.e. from Buddhist teaching).

Figure 6.5: The effect of religiosity on ways of living, particularly in the Thai context



As voluntary simplicity (i.e. one type of ethical consumption) was mentioned most often from the Buddhist perspective, it should be noted that this concept has been strongly imprinted on individuals' lives in Thai society, and is considered as pertaining to “ideal” ethical living. One important reason that sufficient living has been emphasised in Thailand is because the idea comes from religion and His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Suwanraks, 2000). The philosophy of the sufficiency economy (SE) to some extent links to the Buddhist ‘middle way’ of living. It serves a nation's economic and social development by encouraging people to apply the middle path to life (Piboolsravut, 2004; Pruetipibultham, 2010). Religion (Buddhism) and the King are considered as the

two most influential and respective institutions lying at the heart of Thai society, and the participants do not hesitate to follow their teachings.

As discussed, religiosity through Buddhist ethics also has a controlling power over one's moral actions and ethical decisions. This leads to the concept of "self-monitoring", which interrelates between one's (moral) self and practices of ethical consumption. Also, it is often seen that the ethical behaviour is not always certain in every situation, thus the factor that can remind or monitor people to behave in accordance with, for example, religious teachings and beliefs and the moral self (including actual self and ideal self) is crucial for this study.

6.5 Self-monitoring

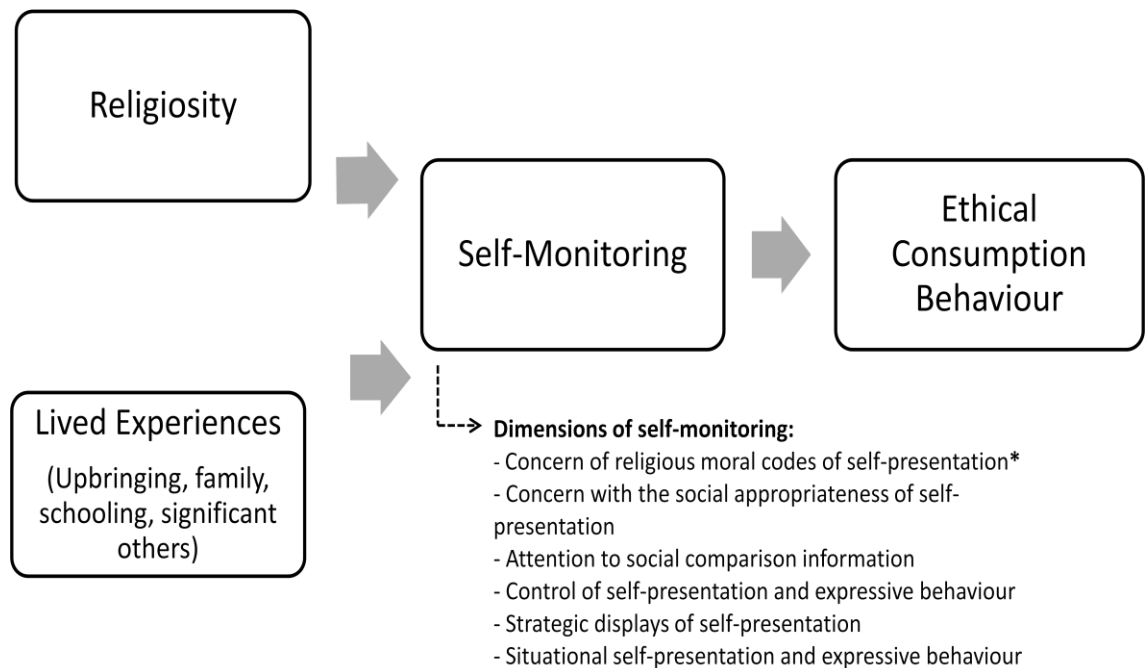
Self-monitoring was found to have an influential and interacting role in ethical consumption decision-making and behaviour in the current study. Previous empirical research in consumer behaviour and consumer ethics has attempted to examine some interactive variables that have an impact on the subjects studied. Vitell et al. (2009) proposed the role of self-control in the relationship of religiosity and moral identity, but the result was not as expected. Kavak et al.'s (2009) study proposed self-monitoring variable to investigate ethical attitudes, indicating that high self-monitors have higher ethical concerns. However, there is still limited number of studies focusing on the influence of the 'controlling behaviour' variables in ethical consumer decision-making (O'Fallon and Butterfield, 2005). Thus, the findings in the current study advance an understanding of the roles of self-monitoring as to control or monitor consumer behaviour in the ethical consumption context, while extending the concept of

self-monitoring (Synder, 1974; Synder and Monson, 1975; Gangestad and Synder, 2000) in relation to religiosity, lived experiences and the self and its dimensions. Thus, self-monitoring influences and functions between the self and ethical consumption, in which it is discussed in detail in sections 6.5.1 and 6.5.2.

6.5.1 Self-monitoring and ethical decisions as impacted by religiosity and lived experiences

With respect to the consumer ethics context, the findings suggest that religiosity and lived experiences, including family, upbringing, schooling and significant others, influence individuals to observe and exert control over their ethical behaviour. Religiosity acts as guidance and reminder for individuals to consider whether they are behaving according to the religious moral codes provided. For example, *Panya* highlighted that “dharma reminds me” in how he should do good, not be greedy and not take advantage of others. When he makes decisions in life, religion to some extent monitors the decisions, particularly the simple living by which *Panya* has tried to practise the “middle path” or “moderation”. From this, it suggests that religiosity is one of the relevant elements that functions in self-monitoring to control one’s self-presentation and expressive behaviour, as shown in Figure 6.6. This in turn adds an additional dimension to the five conceptual dimensions of constructing self-monitoring proposed by Leone (2006). Thus, concern with religious moral codes of self-presentation could be included as one of the dimensions of self-monitoring applicable in the Thai consumer context.

Figure 6.6: Self-monitoring and ethical consumption impacted by religiosity and lived experiences



*Added dimensions to Leone's (2006) conceptual dimensions of constructing self-monitoring. The current study extends this concept into an ethical consumption context.

Another important finding was that individuals monitor themselves in line with their beliefs and personal values gained from their lived experiences. These lived experiences come from, for instance, the environment in which the person has grown up and been educated. Also, the significant others and the learning process from those experiences (both good and bad experiences) are related to lived experiences and affect the influence of self-monitoring on ethical behaviour and decision. In relation to one's lived experiences, it shows that the person is aware of morality and ethics when he or she encounters an ethical dilemma, such as overspending or wrongdoing. However, in some situations self-monitoring happens intuitively, most often when it is activated through the inner self as the ethical values are already internalised within the self. This reveals more automatic self-monitoring among individuals by stating that, for

example “a sense telling me” (*Krittapak*) and “I feel bad” (*Ladda*). From this study, it seems that once there is an internalised ethical values including emotion in the process to the self, individuals tend to monitor themselves more instinctively.

Furthermore, the learning that a person has gained through personal experiences signposts, in some cases, that self-monitoring happens through foreseen consequences (as discussed in the findings and analysis chapter, section 5.4). In this case, the values of the product encourage the individual to consume ethically. As found in this study, ethical consumption offers values that are beyond the physical attributes themselves, as it also provides intangible and symbolic values to consumers (as discussed in section 6.2.2). Individuals’ engagement in ethical consumption behaviour is monitored in the degree to which these values are in line with moral salience.

The notion of “socially appropriate behaviour” is parallel to ethical behaviour in this study, in which self-monitoring aims to guide the behaviour regarding social cues (Synder, 1974). Apart from family members, religion and the upbringing environment, it is somewhat surprising that social norms show little influence on individuals’ decision-making regarding ethical consumption. The participants admitted that social norms are just a small part of their ethical consuming decision-making, as social norms have not been perceived as an “all-time” moral standard for society. Rather, they account for morality and the moral self within a person. They highlighted that sometimes some social norms are inappropriate and could cause intense tension in the societal environment, such as being money and wealth-oriented, materialism and opportunism. So, when the participants are considering whether or not actions are ethical, it is more

appropriate to consider morals, ethics and social benefits as a whole. In term of the self-concept, it seems that the participants monitor their ethical behaviours more closely to the inner self. However, it should be underlined that one's ethical behaviour needs to gain at least some social acceptance, although other elements of social interaction still play a crucial role in the ethical consumption context.

Therefore, it is worth stressing that in self-monitoring in the context of ethical concerns and consumption, the expressive behaviour tends to be triggered by both self-initiated and some external or social cues. As a result, individuals heighten the possibility of engaging in ethical consumption practices. Furthermore, self-monitoring does not only play an influential role in an individual's ethical behaviour, it also functions between one's self (including the moral self) and ethical consumption.

6.5.2 Self-monitoring functioning in the self and ethical consumption relationship

In this study it is clear that self-monitoring makes a difference in individuals' ethical consuming behaviour through self-observation and self-control regarding religiosity, lived experiences and social appropriateness. From the findings, self-monitoring can best be described as an individual's ability to regulate his or her expressive behaviour in such a way that it provides a better fit between one's self or the moral self and one's moral environment. Hence, it helps the person to stay close to his or her moral identity. It could be argued that the better one monitors oneself, the better one's expressive moral identity (based on one's self-concept) and the higher the chances are of having ethical consumption experiences. As explored, self-monitoring in this study is exhibited to the extent

that it is associated with the impact of the self-concept on individuals' ethical consuming behaviour.

However, despite the fact that the studies of Kavak et al. (2009) and Glover et al. (1997) claimed that they found no moderating effect in self-monitoring on the relationship between the level of moral development and consumers' ethics, it is still considered as a crucial factor in consumer ethics in this study. Interestingly, the current study reveals results that differ from those studies. As the participants attempted to express their personal ethics or morals through ethical consumption, self-monitoring was found to enhance the incidence of its occurrence. A possible explanation for this might be that the participants consider ethical consumption as a form of symbolic meanings and values in which they can symbolise or portray the self – the moral self and the moral identity. When this ethical self-image is important to them, the way in which they regulate behaviour in line with the self is even more vital. Hence, it could be implied that self-monitoring helps to create the self–ethics relationship.

In some contexts of ethical consumption, (over)consumption is viewed as unethical behaviour, so that individuals observe and control themselves at a certain time of consumption. It was found that although the individual includes the moral self and moral salience within the self, there is still a need to be aware of oneself and take control over such behaviour. In this specific context, the individuals reflect on their moral self and moral identity, in which the terms such as “self-reliant”, “self-sufficient”, “not greedy” and “moderation” are used to monitor oneself and one's expressive behaviour. This links to the way in which the individuals hold a particular moral identity, whether it is their actual self or their ideal self. With respect to dimensions of the self, self-monitoring was also

found to interact between the actual self and ideal self in relation to ethical consumption behaviour. For example, *Umapon* is a dog lover and cares about animals (the actual self), so she deliberately chooses to consume non-animal testing cosmetics. *Umapon* also aims to stop exploiting animals as much as she can (the ideal self), so she controls herself to eat less meat or even becomes a vegetarian for a certain period of time.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter discuss a holistic experience of ethical consumption by the Thai consumers. It indicates the role of the self that is relevant and significant to ethical consumption behaviour, as expected. Based on the phenomenological paradigm, self-concept is placed along the continuum of an internal psychological self-aspect and an external social aspect (Reed, 2002). In the context of ethical consumption, it shows that the substantive factors, including one's moral salience, moral self, religious beliefs and Buddhist ethics affect oneself and one's ethical consumption behaviour closely from the internal value. In term of moral (self) identity, although it is part of the self, individual's identity tends to reflect on one's (inner) self as well as on how he or she express the self to public. Therefore, the moral identity to some extent leans towards the external value. Not only are the intrinsic values within the self counted, the external drives such as social interactions including close social environment (e.g. family, peers, school, role models and upbringing) and distant social environment (e.g. culture, social norms and advertising campaign) also provide crucial meanings to oneself and ethical consumption. However, self-monitoring is posited both in the internal and external drives as it relates to one's inner self

(including the moral self and religious beliefs) and social cues by attempting to obtain socially or ethically appropriate behaviour.

In summary, the overall conceptual framework of the role of self-concept in ethical consumption in the Thai consumer context is presented at the beginning of the chapter, in Figure 6.2. This highlights the relevant factors through processes of internalisation and externalisation that the self-concept is manifested in ethical consumption. It gives an opportunity for the current study to view the self from internalised and externalised concepts of self. Importantly, this thesis suggests the interrelationships between self-concept (including dimensions of self, possible selves, moral self and moral identity), self-motives, religiosity, self-monitoring and other social influences in relation to ethical consumption behaviour. From these associations, it can be indicated that religiosity and moral salience are strong sources of one's morality, moral self and moral identity that comprise the overall self-concept. Social interaction also affects the self-concept and the extent to which individuals consider ethics and consume ethically. Reference individuals, such as parents or family members and role models, or in short namely the significant others, show some influences on how a person perceives ethics and decides on consumption. However, social norms were found to be less relevant in the study, as they were counted as part of the distant social environment and not completely moral deeds. Yet, socially appropriate behaviour is in line with ethical behaviour, in which self-monitoring influences and interacts in the relationship between one's self and ethical consumption by creating a ripple effect of inward and outward flows of the self and ethics. Self-monitoring, therefore, plays an influential and intermediary role in such internalisation and externalisation processes.

Regarding the theory of image congruency, this study also indicates the congruence between one's self-image (including actual self-image and ideal self-image) and the image or meaning of ethical consumption. It is when there is the match between internalised and externalised values that in turn signposts the self-ethics congruency. Using the concept of image congruency (Grubb and Garthwohl, 1967; Sirgy, 1982), it reveals that ethical consumption offers individuals something beyond its physical or tangible values; rather, it provides symbolic meanings and even results in a "unique self" or "being different from others". Regarding the symbolism through sacred meanings and social meanings (Arnould et al., 2004), individuals express themselves through the inner self and emotions associated with the moral self and moral identity. The ideal self helps the individual to achieve self-enhancement through ethical consumption. Other self-motives are included in order to sustain and heighten one's self-esteem as well as to remain true to the self in relation to ethics. Moreover, the study found different self-elements that have emerged from the findings. The dimensions of self (actual self and ideal self), the possible selves (desired or positive self and undesired or negative self), the moral self and the moral identity all reveal some relationships with ethical behaviour. With these different selves, the current study is able to extend the self-concept, including different aspects of the self to the consumer ethics domain.

The focus on the Thai consumer context has revealed that this is the case where a significant value has been placed on religiosity. Religiosity, therefore, has a powerful influence on one's morality and ethical behaviour. The study shows that religiosity is linked to morality, which in turn impacts on individuals' moral self and moral identity. It also has a positive effect on ethical consumption behaviour and reduces the occurrence of morally questionable behaviour.

Religiosity, in this study, acts as moral guidance and reminder, and encourages healthier and moral ways of living. From a process of internalisation, the self is underpinned by religiosity that is also related to one's inner self and personal values through subconscious. This can be referred to a concept of morality to the self (Damon and Hart, 1992) associating with moral judgements and ethical behaviour. It leads the individuals to intuitively engage in ethical consumption. As the self is internalised by morals and ethical values gained from religiosity, moral salience, significant others and upbringing (close) environment, moral self is developed within oneself. Taking together of social interaction to the self, it allows the individuals to experience and being part of a certain surrounding. In the ethical context, these social influences provide some ethical guideline, in which the ethical values are brought to and imprinted on one's self. When moral self is in line with the individual's behaviour, positive emotion and moral meanings to the self can be generated. By making sin or violating of the five precepts, on the other hand, negative emotions can be developed (such as feelings of shame and guilt) through such unethical phenomena. With these negative emotions, it in turn can be used as a negative impulse to unethical consumption to avoid the negative or undesired self; and as a positive impulse to ethical consumption behaviour.

The positive or desired self and negative or undesired self to some extent are also related to how the individuals reflect the self back to the society. This then involves the process of externalisation. In a particular, the self interacts with ethical values (from moral self, religiosity, moral salience and virtue ethics) through externalisation is found to construct one's moral identity. It shows when the individuals express themselves through moral identity (e.g. a "good-hearted" and "self-reliant" person) by having ethical consumption. Hence, it can be

concluded that not only the moral self can be gained as the self is internalised by morals, religious beliefs and other ethical and social values, but the self is also construct through moral identity to express one's self as it is externalised with such values and beliefs. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the moral identity is more appealing when ethical or religious values are in line with one's personal values, and when those personal values are even underpinned by the moral self.

Chapter 7

Conclusion:

The study seeks to explore the role of self through ethical consumption in a religious culture setting where religiosity serves as an important source of one's morality. It also addresses meanings associated with self-concept and ethical consumption relationship from consumers' voices and lived experiences. To understand the interplay between meanings of self and ethics, this thesis attempts to employ "self-image congruency model" (Grubb and Garthwohl, 1967; Sirgy, 1982a) to the ethical consumption context. Thailand was selected to be studied due to the fact that it is where religion has been placed high values among consumers. Then, regarding ethical behaviour, it is interesting to discover how Thai consumers monitor themselves accordingly to ethics. Thus, self-monitoring is also highlighted in this self-ethics relationship. It should be noted that as the consumers are explored through their actual and lived experiences of ethical consumption, these consumers are considered as an experiencer who convey moral meanings of such phenomenon.

As acknowledged the meaning that is to be discovered and constructed regarding its existence (Crotty, 1988), the study is drawn upon the philosophical viewpoint of constructionism. By taking this philosophical viewpoint, the existential phenomenological approach is adopted, within qualitative inquiry. Reality or truth emerge from *being in the world* and its contexts as when the actual experiences in different contexts of ethical consumption are focused in relation to the self. Ten phenomenological in-depth interviews were conducted in the Thai consumer context, creating a dialogue between consumers and the researcher to suggest the deeper meaning of such experiences and its contexts

onto the self. Within the phenomenological paradigm, the self-concept in this study is posited along the continuum between internally and externally related factors. In so doing, it takes the self into account from a wide spectrum – from the inner self (e.g. moral self, personal values and emotions) to a social-related self (e.g. moral identity, social interaction to the self). Consumer's stories that reflect different aspects and images of the self from past and present are revealed in relation to ethics and ethical consumption.

Overall, the research questions have been addressed that are: the key factors shaping the self-concept, different dimensions and aspects of self in relation to ethical consumption experiences, applications of self-image congruency model to consume ethics and consumption study; the impact of religiosity on one's self, ethical behaviour and ways of living; and the influence of self-monitoring on the self and ethical behaviour patterns. The findings conceptualise the interrelationship between self-concept and ethical consumption and highlight religiosity as a moral guidance and reminder that influences different aspects of the self, ethical judgements and consumption behaviours. Self-monitoring also plays an interacting role in bridging the gap between one's moral self and ethical consumption behaviour through both internal and social values.

From an investigation of consumers' lived experiences through self-concept and ethical consumption, the meaning or essence of the experiences is gained. The essence of the ethical consumption experiences is emerged from processes of internalisation and externalisation (shown in the discussion chapter, in Figure 6.2), reflecting the self-ethics relationship. It reveals that the role of self in an ethical consumption context is dynamic and contextual because the multidimensional self is shaped by various experiences on such consumption.

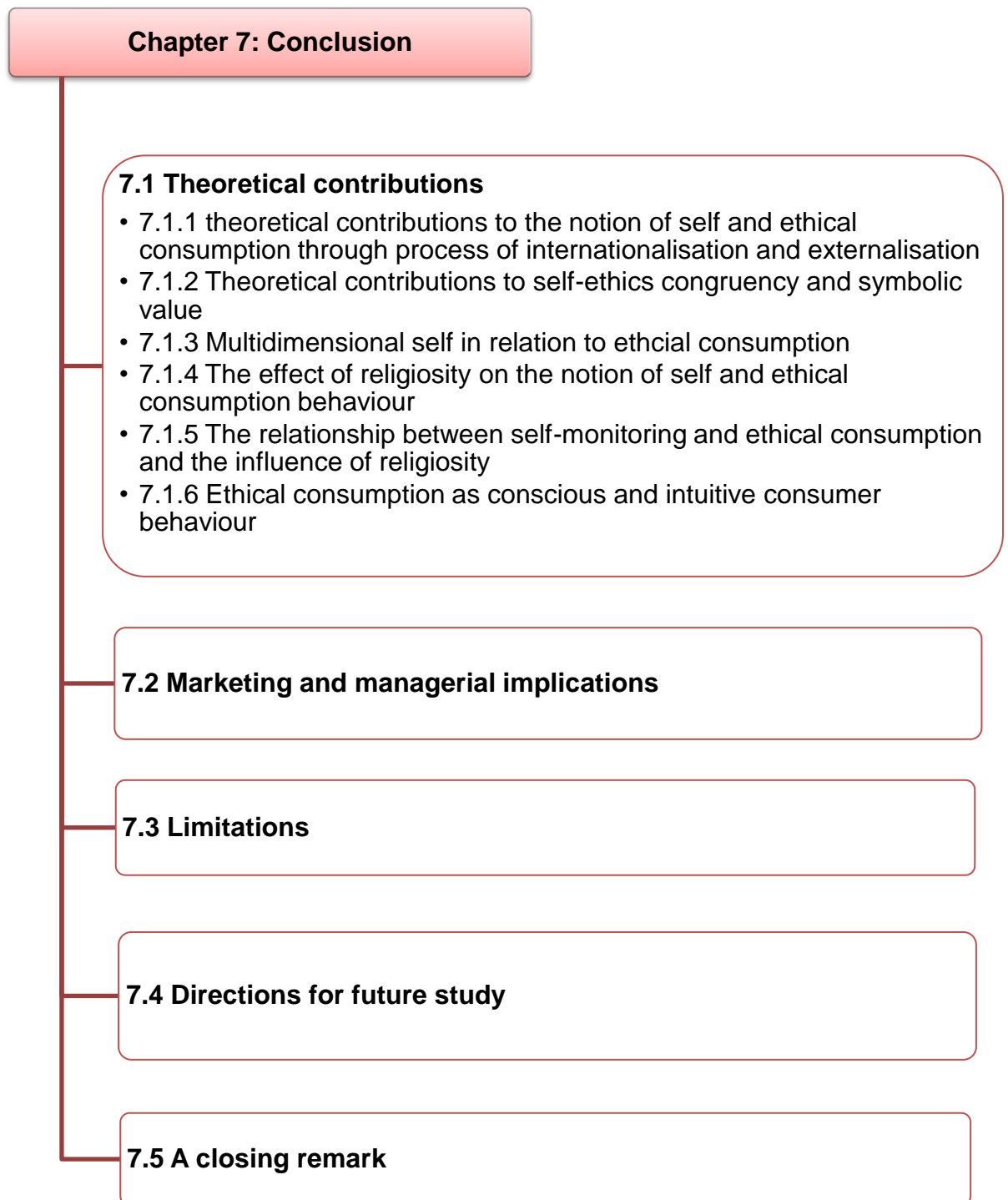
The findings show that dimensions of the self (i.e. actual self, ideal self, desired self, undesired self) can be identified when the participants describes themselves through ethical consumption experiences. Some participants perceive themselves to be ethical through voluntary simplicity that enables them to achieve the ideal self and in some case the desired self, whereas others express their actual self through the consumption of organic products. Also, the interplay between the self and ethical consumption has brought the study to the point that the image of a person or “self-image” is in line with the meaning or image associated with ethical consumption. In this respect, this study has exposed the “self-ethics congruency” through ethical consumption behaviour.

This chapter lays out the theoretical contributions, managerial and marketing implications, limitations and future research, and Figure 7.1 provides an overall structure of this conclusion chapter. Section 7.1 points out the theoretical significances of this study based on its findings and the existing literature from previous studies. The theoretical contributions are established upon the understanding of the self-ethics relationship. With this relationship, moral self and moral identity can be identified relating to the identity theory (Stryker, 1980; Stryker and Burke, 2000).

By exploring the self-concept in the ethical consumption context, it reveals the processes of internalisation and externalisation involved in the study (discussed in section 7.1.1). Section 7.1.1 discusses on the role of self and ethical consumption through these processes in a bigger picture, where there are two-way interactions between internal and external factors that emerged in the study. As found, the match between a consumer’s self-image (i.e. image of the self) and the meanings of ethical consumption motivate the consumers to

engage in such consumption. In turn, this suggests a concept of self-ethics congruence (discussed in section 7.1.2), extending the self-image congruency model (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; Grubb et al., 1967) into consumer ethics research. Different aspects of the self-concept in relation to ethical consumption are also discussed in section 7.1.3 suggesting multidimensional self is involved in the self-ethics relationship. Furthermore, as religiosity has shown a strong impact on the self, ethical consumption and ways of living, this in turn offers some significant meanings to consumer ethics and moral development (discussed in section 7.1.4). Self-monitoring together with religious influence can create more controlling power that brings one's moral self close to ethics and ethical behaviour (discussed in section 7.1.5). In addition to these contributions, "symbolism" or "symbolic value" is reflected from the consumer's perceptions and experiences. This has bought the current study to argue that ethical consumption can be considered as symbolic consumption and intuitive consumer behaviour (discussed in section 7.1.6). Then, section 7.2 reviews how this thesis can be used in a real business and society, in terms of the managerial and marketing implications. A detailed discussion of the limitations and suggestions for future research are also included in section 7.3 and 7.4 respectively.

Figure 7.1: A structure of conclusion – Chapter 7



7.1 Theoretical contributions

The contribution relates to the identified gaps in the relevant literature of the self-concept in the context of ethical consumption. As discussed earlier (in

chapter 2), Kavak et al. (2009) indicated that self-concept and self-monitoring within a context of ethical consumption is still understudied. Although there were some studies that attempted to examine ethical decision and behaviour by including self-related factors, such as the personal characteristics (Vitell, 2003; Rallapalli et al., 1994), self-identity (Shaw and Shiu, 2002), and the link of self-expression and social recognition (Cherrier, 2007), significant gaps still exist in the current understanding of how consumers actually incorporate the notion of self including self-image into their ethical consumption behaviours; and what the meanings associated with the self and ethical consumption.

This study also recognises that the self-image congruency model (Grubb and Garthwohl, 1967; Sirgy 1982a) has not been studied in the contexts of consumer ethics and ethical consumption. Moreover, previous studies have emphasised the role of religiosity in ethical behaviour and judgement (e.g. Clark and Dawson, 1996; Signhapakdi et al., 2000a; Vitell, 2009) and have claimed that there is a relationship between religiosity and moral identity (e.g. Weaver and Agle, 2002; Vitell etl al., 2009). Nonetheless, inconsistent results in these with regard to the effect of religiosity on one's ethics were found. From this standpoint, the current study helps to clarify this relationship by focusing the meanings of religiosity through the concepts of self and ethical consumption behaviour. This thesis, therefore, has made some headway in exploring the self-concept (e.g. Rosenberg, 1979; Sirgy, 1982a) and the self-image congruency (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; Grubb et al., 1967) into the contexts of consumer ethics, religiosity and ethical consumption.

Importantly, most consumer research has heavily treated the self-concept as a form of social-recognition, focusing on information processing and knowledge

gained in the memory of consumers (e.g. Hogg and Garrow, 2003; Hosany and Martin, 2011; Graff, 1996; Landon, 1974; Ross, 1971). Studies have paid little attention to the self-concept that is inferred and reflected through a person's lived experiences and perception. So the current study adopts the phenomenological paradigm of the self-concept to explore the role of self in relation to ethical consumption regarding one's experiences, including the contexts around these experiences. By examining the self through the phenomenological approach, this thesis captures meanings of self through different contexts of ethical consumption experiences, in which the self is flexible on its own by moving along internal and external influences. Hence, this study fills the gap in the existing self-concept, consumption and consumer behaviour literature.

Furthermore, existing consumer research has concentrated largely on consumption in the United States (Karanika and Hogg, 2010). Particularly, Singhapakdi et al. (2000a) pointed out that there has been limited interest among researchers to develop business and marketing ethics models focusing on specific countries, in a non-Western context. The current study also notices that previous studies conducted the investigation mostly on a business and marketing ethics, rather from the side of consumer perspective. Fukukawa (2003), for instance, argued that although business ethics has advanced in developing comprehensive models, consumer ethics still has not gained enough attention on its own model development. Taken together, so far there have been limited studies focusing on the self-concept and ethical consumption in the area of consumer ethics (from consumer perspective), especially in the Asian context. Therefore, this thesis sheds greater light on how the self interacts and is shaped by ethical consumption where the significant meanings are gained

from consumers' direct experiences and viewpoints throughout the processes, within the religious, Thai context. Then, the study has added the self-ethics relationship with an influence of religiosity, as Thai consumers' lives are influenced by religious beliefs and teachings, hence extending the self-image congruency (Grubb and Garthewohl, 1967; Sirgy 1982a) into the existing literature in consumer ethics research.

The self-ethics relationship was evident within each consumer involved in this thesis. Literally, factors that influence and have emerged within the consumption process show the interactions between the self and ethical consumption behaviour. This has brought the current study to be able to conceptualise the relationship between the self-concept and ethical consumption into the processes of internalisation and externalisation.

7.1.1 Theoretical contributions to the notion of self and ethical consumption through processes of internalisation and externalisation

As extending the notion of self into the context of ethical consumption, it shows that the self plays a crucial role in moral judgements and behavioural patterns of ethical consumption. The self has emerged not only from the inner self, but also from social and contextual-cultural influences. From these findings, the current study enhances an understanding of the self-concept through processes of internalisation and externalisation, within an ethical consumption context. To illustrate these processes, the personal values, emotion (as detailed in section 7.1.6.), attitudes, religious beliefs, lived experiences and social values are integrated into (i.e. internalised) one's self while expressing a concept of self onto the outside world (i.e. externalised). Taken together with the self and ethics relationship through internalisation and externalisation, this study suggests that

the self is developed through ethical consumption, underpinned by the moral self (derived from the inner self) and to some extent the moral (self) identity is constructed in the process. With respect to the moral self, this concept is in line with Damon and Hart's study (1992) of "morality to the self" in that when the self-concept is organised around the moral beliefs, it is more likely that an individual takes those beliefs into action in life. The centrality of morality was claimed to be "the single most powerful determiner of concordance between moral judgement and conduct" (Damon and Hart, 1992, p.455). The current study advances this understanding by suggesting that the moral self is seen as a significant influence on one's morals and ethical behaviour, but there are also other factors, such as moral salience, virtue ethics, and religiosity that have played such crucial roles as the antecedent of personal morals.

Despite the fact that previous studies have investigated the relationship between morality and marketing (e.g. Fourcade and Healy, 2007), morality and community (e.g. Vaisey, 2007), morality and sustainability (e.g. Parkinds and Raig, 2006), Stets and Carter (2011) argued that an analysis of the self as a moral entity remains understudied. The current study takes into account the individuals who make their moral judgements through the self, regarding the concerns about ethical and unethical actions. With the focus on the self in relation to morality, the study can address a critical question raised by Hardy and Carlo (2005) of what factors can develop the moral identity. From the findings, the interplay between moral self and moral identity in ethical consumption suggests that the way an individual holds the moral identity (e.g. being honest, being kind, being sympathetic, and being generous) is corresponding to his or her moral self. This means that the moral identity is developed through a moral sense of self (as part of the overall self-concept) that

one has. However, the distinction between moral self and moral identity is that the moral self emerges close one's inner self that relates to how the person has been raised and taught (i.e. upbringing, family, religious beliefs and teachings) and to what experiences he or she has gained (i.e. lived experiences). Whereas, the moral identity is placed slightly close to the external continuum where the self is seen from his or her perception as well as from the public, as the way the person expresses him- or herself onto the society.

Furthermore, the current study applies "identity theory" (Stryker, 1982; Stryker and Burke, 2000) to the contexts of consumer ethics and ethical consumption in order to contextualise the role of self, with particular emphasis on the moral self and moral identity. This application helps to explain that consumers use moral identity to construct their self-definitions. Moral identity is viewed in this study as one element of the self-concept as linked to a set of moral traits that shows what type of a moral person he or she is. This can be seen from the interviews, for instance, "I want to prove that I can be self-reliant" (*Panya*), "being honest with myself, sincerity, not taking advantage of others, good thinking and good action are my main things [...] It (religion) teaches me to be good-hearted" (*Ploynatda*), and "I don't want to encourage piracy [...] I don't like taking advantage of or hurting people directly or indirectly" (*Pichaed*). Earlier studies have examined only limited aspects of moral identity. Often, these studies focused on only justice and care as the moral identity (e.g. Stets and Carter, 2011; Stets et al., 2008). The current study supports the idea posited by Blasi (1984, 1993) in that the moral identities can be varied in content, where a person might consider being compassionate as essential to his or her moral identity, and others might emphasise being fair and just. With this in mind, the thesis has allowed some flexibility of contexts around the moral identity and had

added different aspects of the moral identity or the moral person. This links to a concept of the multidimensional self that will be discussed later in 7.1.3.

Although Blasi (1984) indicated the moral identity as the “real me” or “essential self” when being moral is central or core to individuals, the theoretical conceptualisation in this thesis goes beyond considering it; rather to show that moral identity can match a consumer’s actual self (e.g. the real me) as well as achieve the ideal self (e.g. to be a better person) and the desired self (e.g. to be proud, to be satisfied). Therein, it is highlighted that the moral identity also corresponds to moral self-consistency (when the actual self is close or similar to meanings attached to the moral identity) and moral enhancement (when oneself can be served with the desired meanings of the moral identity). In addition, the self-ethics relationship has been explored to the fact that moral identity emerged and developed across life stages, from childhood to maturity; and life experiences, from the past to present and even in the future. Factors that involve in such development are both internal factors (i.e. psychological, moral self, personal values, attitudes) and external factors (i.e. upbringing, schooling, significant others, religion, and living environment).

Taken together, it could be highlighted that a consumer’s moral identity is also associated with certain beliefs, attitudes, personal values, moral salience, and experiences. The moral identity might be seen as an important influence on ethical consumption behaviour, however, it should be noted that the meanings and outcomes associated with certain traits or attributes are more critical to guide ethical behaviour. In this study, for example, the moral identity has bought the consumer (*Panya*) to be able to practice *majjhimā paṭipadā* (middle path or moderation); to achieve *Sin Ha* (the five precepts) (*Ploynatda*). In turn, a

consumer's lived experiences appear to have impacts on both moral self and moral identity.

Through an internalisation process between the self and ethical consumption, moral salience is revealed to have great impacts on one's morals. The current study has found that the degree to which the moral identity becomes an important element of the self is related to "moral salience" (Aquino and Reed, 2002; Aquino et al., 2009) within one's self. From the findings in this study, multiple identity and selves have emerged when the consumers describe and reflect on themselves and their ethical consumption experiences. It shows that in some case the moral identity is activated and considered as important to the self, but at some certain point in time other identities (e.g. being socialised, being self-oriented) might also temporarily central to the self. This could refer back to Markus and Kunda (1986) who pointed out that consumers may have multiple identities and some identities might be more important than others to the self. With a concept of "moral salience", it helps to address this issue as it could provide the rationale of how the moral identity is held to one's self. As moral salience is referred to the activation of moral identity (Stets and Carter, 2011), the current study suggests that the moral identity together with moral salience can even enhance the important attributes of the moral identity and meanings of morality to the individuals. It shows that the consumers who have moral self and high moral salience are likely to express themselves through the identities that relate to morals, which in turn promote ethical behaviour in consumption.

In addition to moral salience, virtue ethics are involved in the processes of internalisation and externalisation regarding the self-ethics relationship. In this

study virtue ethics is considered as one factor of the antecedent of personal morals. Virtue ethics is seen to be related to the self-interest towards ethics that has been developed from the consumers' experiences from the past and present. With the relationship between the self and ethical consumption, virtue ethics emerges at the point where ethics is taken part in life and consumption patterns. Barnett et al. (2005, p.17) distinguished virtue ethics from other moral philosophies (i.e. consequentialism and deontology) in that "virtue ethicists try to awaken us enlightened self-interest in caring for others." As the term "virtue ethics" refers to human excellence and goodness (Cafaro, 2004; Taylor, 2002), the character traits is also relevant in this approach. The current study has indicated virtue ethics when the consumers concern less for the sake of themselves with the attitude of "helping" others and societal benefits. Different virtuous traits have emerged as the consumers are describing about the self, lifestyles and ways of living, such as fairness, green living, simple living, and social concerns. In this study, it also found that even though social benefits and other consequences gained from having ethical consumption are key motivation of moral judgements among the consumers, more fundamentally it is a desire of upholding personal integrity. For example, *Umapon* explained that "I am an animal lover and I can't stand to see those poor innocent animals being mistreated." It seems like what made *Umapon* to choose non-animal testing products is because of the self-interest to morality. In this respect, what the study recognises is that a merging of virtue ethics and moral self has helped the consumers to develop moral concerns leading them to act in ethical ways, for instance, supporting locally sourced products (e.g. OTOP), more environmentally sustainable products, and voluntary simplicity.

Through internalisation and externalisation, there is a learning process involving in the behavioural benchmarking from significant others (e.g. family members, peers, and role models), in which they are viewed as a reference group. In an effect of social influence, the individuals look for social approval that supports their decisions on accepted and ethical behaviours. This social influence is regarded as social interaction in this study as it interacts with the self and ethical consumption behaviour, and can be categorised into the close social environment (e.g. family, peers, school, and upbringing environment) and the distant social environment (e.g. role models, people in the society, social norms, and culture). These two forms of the social interaction have brought to different degrees of the impact. The close social environment has stronger and more direct impact on the (moral) self, whereas the distant social environment influences the person more indirectly. As a result of this, the current study supports Grubb and Stern's (1971) idea of consumers' interaction with significant others, and also extends this idea to the context of consume ethics. With this respect, the significant others as part of the social interactions are treated by the consumers as a source of ethical approval and meanings for good deeds and ethical behaviour. These meanings given by the significant others, regarding ethical behaviour, can be internalised into one's moral self and also be externalised through the moral identity.

As meanings associated with the ethical consumption is crucial for the self and how people perceive themselves through such consumption experiences, self-image and symbolism are both involved in the process. The consumers in this study highlight that by engaging in ethical consumption it enables them to communicate their self-image onto the society. This involves an interacting

communication process between product or consumption and one's self through shared meanings, privately and publicly.

7.1.2 Theoretical contributions to self-ethics congruency and symbolic value

It appears that ethical consumption is taken in the form of “symbols”. According to Warner (1959), symbols refer to things that are used to stand for or express through unitary characters including signs and meanings. In this respect together with the findings, image and meaning are central to the self-ethics interacting process. There are meanings of ethical consumption that emerged from consumer's perspective. The findings indicate that when the consumers engage or experience in ethical consumption, the ethical behaviour is related to symbolic interaction. Ethical consumption itself can be considered as one kind of the symbolic consumption, in which this study found the link between self-image and product or consumption image. With these images, it provides symbolic values to consumers. As studied, consumers have perceived the ethical consumption not only to give them a healthier living, but also to show their ethical self-image and even to make them a better person. This extends the meanings of ethical consumption to have sacred and social meanings. Arnould et al. (2004) explained that sacred meaning relates to things are supremely important to a person and can trigger some emotional involvement, whereas social meaning allows a person to communicate who he or she is through consumer goods. For instance, some consumers in this study even described ethical consumption as happiness. So it could be argued that apart from being motivated by social benefits and good deeds gained from having

ethical consumption, consumers choose ethical products or ethical consumption based on its symbolic meanings.

Taken together, the study suggests that ethical consumption offers consumers with both functional and symbolic values. It goes beyond the tangible, physical characteristics; rather it serves as a means of expressing morals between the individual and society (i.e. people in the society). Also, it is interesting to note that to be considered as symbolic consumption, ethical consumption is manifested into the self, wherein the sacred meanings are likely to be carried through the inner self, while social meanings are developed through the ideal self as well as self identity. This addresses why the current study needs to explore the role of the self-concept in relation to ethical consumption behaviour as there is reflexive relationship between the self, consumption, and society. The self is developed (i.e. moral self) and communicated (i.e. moral identity) through ethical consumption, in which the symbolic values are interacting within the process.

Herein, this thesis has made some headway in exploring the match of self-image and image or meaning of ethical consumption, based on the self-image congruency model (Grubb and Garthwohl, 1967; Sirgy, 1982a). According to Grubb and Grathwohl (1967), “self-congruity”, in short, offers the links between an individual’s self-concept (based on the psychological construct) and the symbolic value of products. This self-congruity is seen and applied in the current study. The findings confirm that there is the self-ethics congruency, by which a consumer whose self-image is in line with the meaning of ethical consumption is more likely to choose ethical products or engage in such consumption. As found, self-ethics congruency can be seen in the way that the

actual self is reflected through the use of ethical products or ethical consumption, and the self is also improved or enhanced to achieve the ideal self (e.g. to be more self-reliant, a better person), with respect to both sacred and social meanings towards such consumption. From self-ethics congruency, it can be concluded that consumers engage in the ethical consumption (in different contexts, e.g. voluntary simplicity, fairtrade and organic products) when their self-image and product or consumption image (including meaning) are consistent with, enhance, or in some way serve well with the concept they have about themselves (i.e. self-concept). Particularly, such consumption is line with a consumer's moral self and moral identity that can satisfy the inner self as well as properly communicate his or her identity to other people. Thus, these findings represent an extension of the self-mage congruency model into the ethical consumption context, which adds to a growing body of literature on the self-concept, consumption and consumer behaviour (e.g. Quester et a., 2000; Hosany and Martin, 2012; Jamal and Goode, 2001; He and Mukherjee, 2007).

Different dimensions of self also emerged to be associated with the self-ethics congruency and the relationship between the self and ethical consumption. "Actual self", "ideal self" and possible selves (i.e. desired (positive) self and undesired (negative) self) are identified within the study. As discussed earlier, the self-concept in this study is dynamic and contextual, taking role as a moral entity. So the self is expressed and constructed from different aspects in relation to experiences of ethical consumption. In turn, self-motives (i.e. self-consistency and self-esteem) play influential role towards the self and ethical behaviour.

7.1.3 Multidimensional self-concept in relation to ethical consumption

The self in this study has been perceived not only as an internal psychological construct, but also has been shaped by past and current experiences and the social interactions. In particular, the self-concept is embedded in the sense of self that includes all perceptions that the individual and other people hold about him- or herself. In this respect, there are different dimensions of the self-concept that have emerged from the findings when the participants described and reflected on the self regarding ethical consumption experiences. Ultimately, the current study identifies the multiple self involving the relationship between the self and ethical consumption, which are the actual self, the ideal self, the desired (positive) self, and the undesired (negative) self. Taken together, it is the possible selves that have emerged in the phenomenon being studied (as detailed in section 6.3, Figure 6.2). With the possible selves that include all the actual self, the ideal self, the desired self, undesired self, it advances Markus and Nurius's (1986) study of possible selves. Thus, the self, in this study, is multifaceted reflecting the inner self and social-contextual influence. Regarding a concept of multiple selves (Bracken, 1992), the current study extends the multidimensional and context-dependent of the self-concept into consumer ethics research, in the context of ethical consumption behaviour. Although the relationship between different dimensions of self and consumption behaviour has been examined from previous researches (e.g. Karanika and Hogg, 2010; Bosnjak and Brand, 2008; He and Mukherjee, 2007), this study advances our knowledge on how the multidimensional self is developed and involved in the self-ethics process.

The findings indicated that the actual self and the ideal self are significantly relevant with the self-ethics relationship when the consumers engage in ethical consumption. Also, it needs to be noted that each consumer could possess multiple selves based on his or her ethical behaviour and decision making. For instance, *Krittapak* described her actual self in the context of ethical consumption in that “considering and caring for others is who I am because I like to help others [...] it is what I want to do, it’s me.” At the same time ethical consumption also helps *Krittapak* to enhance a sense of self to achieve the ideal self as stated “for me, it makes me feel that I’m not exploiting anyone and our environment that much, like at least I can help our world in some ways. So, I could be in a better position compared to others who don’t care about this. [...] When I choose something that can help others and our society, I feel better.” Both the actual self and the ideal self appear to be related to when the consumers perceive themselves intrinsically of who they are (e.g. I am animal lover; *Umapon*) and who they want to be (e.g. I want to be a good person; *Ploynatda*), corresponding to the inner self, the moral self, personal values, and beliefs.

In addition to the actual self and the ideal self found when the self manifested in ethical consumption, the study has discovered the desired (positive) self and the undesired (negative) self relating to the self-ethics relationship. These selves are more social and contextual dependent comparing to the actual self and the ideal self. With the desired and undesired self, “emotion” plays such an important role in encouraging ethical consumption behaviour. Through consumption experiences, the consumers indicated positive emotions and views of the self, such as “being proud”, “being happy”, “being different”, and “being ethical” as an outcome of having ethical consumption. This positive self

is considered the desired self due to the fact that these positive emotions and aspects of one's self are derived from what one feels about the self and what one thinks the society would expect or want he or she to be. The desired self found in this study supports the idea of Karanika and Hogg (2010) who highlighted that consumption activities are valued if they can project a sense of desired self to consumers. In this case, the desired self of being self-reliant, for example, is perceived as a good, accepted person in Thai society, especially from the religious belief (i.e. Buddhism) and it is what *Panya* wants. This then has motivated *Panya* to live more consciously and to have simple living, consuming moderately.

On the other hand, negative emotions serve as a means of the undesired self in that consumers view the self as "a least-desired identity" (Ogilvie, 1987). The current study, however, does not limit the undesired self only with the identity; rather it includes emotions, perceptions, and meanings associated with certain behaviour to explore the undesired self. There are some negative emotions that have emerged from the interviews, such as feelings of shame, guilt and sadness when the consumers describe when they think or experience unethical consumption practices. These negative emotions could lead the consumers to avoid unethical behaviour as they would rather choose to consume ethically. This incident is in line with the concept of "avoidance of a negative self-state" (Luce, 1998, as discussed in section 4.3). Having the negative aspects of the self, this has bought the consumers to experience the condition of the undesired self. Within the ethical consumption context, the undesired self acts as a negative impulse to unethical behaviour and a positive impulse to ethical behaviour.

Furthermore, what has been found is related to dimensions of the self and ethical consumption is self-motives: self-esteem and self-consistency. From the findings, self-esteem is maintained through the actual self as moral self-expression and is enhanced through the ideal self and desired self as moral self-enhancement. This brings the current study to recognise that the self-esteem motive is involved in the internalised and externalised processes of the self-ethics relationship. As found, consumers maintain or sustain their self-esteem by expressing the inner, actual self with which they integrate their ethical concerns into the consumption. In some cases, consumers enhance the self-esteem by moving from the actual self to the ideal self (e.g. being a better person, being more conscious in life, being more self-reliant) that could encourage them to practice more ethical consumption behaviours. The desired self is also achieved as a result of moral self-enhancement while increasing one's self-esteem.

Another self-motive that has influenced the self-concept and ethical consumption is self-consistency. Self-consistency is the rationale behind why the consumers stay true to who they are. The consumers are motivated to project their actual concepts of self, such as being harmless, being kind, and being sympathetic through ethical consumption behaviour. They admitted that sometimes they are tempted by unnecessary purchase (e.g. designer, luxury products), but because of reminding themselves of who they actually are and their personal values these have helped them to reduce self-conflict. So the self-consistency motive in some cases acts as a driver that encourages the consumers to behave in line with the actual self and the moral self underlying one's morals and moral judgements. Ultimately, this thesis has provided further

insight into how the self-motives influence different dimensions of the self-concept when consumers engage in ethical consumption.

However, self-motives cannot be accounted for only influencing on the self-concept in relation to ethical consumption behaviour. The life and consumption stories of the ten consumers have shed greater light of how religiosity plays such an important role in the self-ethics relationship and internalisation and externalisation processes in the current study. Especially in the Thai context, one's self and personal morals are strongly related to religious beliefs and teachings, as found in section 5.2 and discussed in section 6.4)

7.1.4 The effect of religiosity on the notion of self and ethical consumption behaviour

Religiosity also affects the self-ethics relationship and the internalisation and externalisation processes. The term “religiosity” in this study is used to explore the degree of to which a person is religious person, including the religious beliefs that the person holds as well as how those beliefs are manifested. This supports how Vitell et al. (2009) defined religiosity and the extent to which Vitell and Paolillo (2003) indicated that religion is the foundation of a moral life and the role of religiosity is a key to consumer values and moral beliefs. Also, the current study does not limit itself to any particular type of religion and regardless of different religious contexts it has found that generally the consumers expressed themselves and their religious beliefs and teachings through ethical consumption. Previous studies might have emphasised the influence of religiosity on ethical behaviour and judgement (e.g. Vitell, 2009; Kurpis et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2003; Singhapakdi et al., 2000a; Vitell et al., 2001); and some have linked religiosity with moral identity (e.g. Weaver and Agle, 2002;

Vitell et al., 2009), however, there have been inconsistent results on such influence, regarding intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity (as detailed in section 2.3.2). This sheds some light for the thesis to explore the religiosity at deeper meanings by incorporating the self into the ethical context.

The findings in this study have shown that religiosity has influenced almost all aspects of life in the Thai context. Thai consumers hold religious beliefs and teachings that in turn shape their ways of living, lifestyles, and even attitudes towards ethics and ethical consumption. Particularly, in the Thai consumer context religiosity has played its role in guiding the self and reminding of the moral self; and has influenced the way people consume ethically. Different contexts of ethical consumption have been found to be related to religiosity and one's self. For instance, *Panya* has been practicing *majjhima paṭipadā* or the "middle path" (taught by Buddhism), and from this he is more consciously thinking about what he does. This links to the way *Panya* is being self-sufficient, has a simple lifestyle, and engages in voluntary simplicity. Moreover, some consumers pointed out that *Sin Ha* or five precepts of the Buddhist teachings have impacted on personal morals and how they make decisions on consumption. *Playnatda*, for example, highlighted that religion has brought her to be a good-hearted person, and being this kind of person she chooses to use non-animal testing cosmetics as the way of not to take advantage of others. Taken together, this study suggests that apart from ethical consumption behaviour, religiosity influences the desired self (i.e. the self that the person is desirable and Thai society is accepted that certain self), in which a good-hearted person, a self-reliant person, a self-sufficient person, a conscious person, and a thoughtful person were found. In this sense, these identities are attributes of moral identity. The undesired self also involves in the process, for

example, when the individuals view unethical actions (e.g. exploiting animals, eating live food) as a sin and unacceptable behaviour, they tend avoid tapping into the undesired self. The undesired self together with negative emotions (e.g. feeling ashamed and guilty) can encourage the consumers to engage in ethical consumption.

As indicated, religiosity is involved in the internalisation and externalisation processes of the self-ethics relationship (as shown in Figure 6.2), in this respect religiosity has helped the consumers to develop the moral self and construct the moral identity. Hence, this thesis has provided further meanings of the self-concept manifested in religiosity and an ethical consumption context through internalisation and externalisation. It is consistent with the ideas of Weaver and Agle (2002) and Vitell et al. (2009), who pointed out that an individual's ethical behaviour is affected by moral identity and religious self-identity. From a process of internalisation, the moral self is underpinned by religion that is integrated into one's inner self. This is in line with a concept of morality to the self (Damon & Hart, 1992) which is considered as a powerful factor associating with moral judgements and ethical behaviour. In the Thai context where religion has placed with high values among Thai consumers, it reflects on one's inner self and moral self combining to the overall self. This leads the individuals to intuitively consume ethically (as discussed in section 7.1.6). Furthermore, when the self is internalised by religiosity, it also involves emotional involvement (i.e., positive or negative emotion) that conveys some moral, good and positive meanings to the self. On the other hand, religiosity interacting with the self through externalisation is found to be an antecedent to one's moral identity that influences ethical consumption. This study also suggests that ethical consumption with religious beliefs and values could help the individuals to

construct their moral identities. It is a way to express one's self to the society where he or she is living. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the moral identity is more appealing when religious values are in line with one's personal values, and when those personal values are even underpinned by the moral self.

As religiosity has been highlighted in this study to be part of consumers' lives (i.e. through a sense of self, roles, attitudes, and lifestyles), this supports the idea of an intrinsic role of religiosity based on Allport's (1950) study of the dimensions of religiosity (as detailed in section 2.3.2). Based on the dimensions of religiosity (Allport's 1950), the current study further highlights that the intrinsic role of religiosity is operationalised similarly to the extent that religiosity incorporates into one's self (i.e. internalisation process), which in turn facilitates the inner self, the moral self, the moral identity, moral judgement and life routine. However, it was found in this study that consumers also use religiosity to be a better person or to be satisfied about themselves. This happens when the consumers try to move from the actual self to the ideal self or from the actual self to the desired self. In this sense, religiosity helps the consumers to construct the moral identity that communicates the self onto society (i.e. externalisation process), and that is the extrinsic role of religiosity. Interestingly, both the intrinsic and extrinsic roles of religiosity are seen in this study, by which they interact with one other when being manifested in the self-concept and ethical consumption behaviour. So the extent to which religiosity is processed through internalisation and externalisation in the self-ethics relationship is consistent with the concept of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity, suggested by Allport (1950) and Vitell et al. (2009).

In addition, as discussed earlier in section 6.4.1 that religiosity acts as moral behavioural guidance and as a reminder to one's self is seen to have a guiding power between the moral self and ethical behaviour. In this respect, it plays a self-monitoring role that is also related in the interrelationship between the self-concept and ethical consumption behaviour. Self-monitoring itself is associated with the overall experiences of the self, consumer ethics and consumption.

7.1.5 The relationship between self-monitoring and ethical consumption and the influence of religiosity

Ethical consumption behaviour sometimes needs to be monitored or reminded as the ethical behaviour that is not always certain in all situations. Self-monitoring in this study is taken into account as an interactive function between the self-concept and ethical consumption experiences. What becomes apparent is that self-monitoring has played an influential and interacting role in the processes of internalisation and externalisation of the self-ethics relationship (see Figure 6.2). Previous studies on consumer behaviour and consumer ethics have attempted to investigate "the behavioural control" factor. For example, Vitell et al. (2009) focused on self-control as a mediating role in the relationship of religiosity and moral identity, but the result was not as expected. With respect to the self and consumption, Graeff (1996) self-monitoring is used to investigate the effects of image congruence on consumers' evaluations, in which the moderating effect of self self-monitoring in such relationship was confirmed. In the ethical context, Kavak et al. (2009) also reported the influence of self-monitoring in the relationship between moral development level and consumers' ethics that the high self-monitors tend to have higher ethical concerns comparing to those with low self-monitoring, but

found no moderating effect. Although these empirical studies have attempted to view how consumer behaviour can be controlled, there is still a limited amount of studies that have focused on the “controlling behaviour” variable (O’Fallon and Butterfields, 2005), especially in the ethical context. This thesis advances this understanding by exploring the role of self-monitoring through the self-concept in relation to ethical consumption behaviour.

Religiosity was evident in the current study to have a controlling or guiding power over one’s self, person moral and ethical behaviour. So religiosity is viewed to be part of the self-monitoring process when the consumers monitor themselves to consume ethically. In so doing, this study has added the influence of religiosity to Leone’s (2006) conceptual dimensions of self-monitoring (as detailed section 6.5.1, Figure 6.6). Ultimately, self-monitoring can be implemented to guide the behaviour with regard to religious moral codes of self-presentation. From this standpoint, self-monitoring is seen to control not only the ethical consumption behaviour, but also the self.

Another important finding relating to self-monitoring is lived experiences. Lived experiences have emerged in this study in the way that the individuals monitor themselves through their lived experiences including those religious beliefs, other beliefs (that have happened in life), personal values (that can shape who they are), significant others, and the living environment.

It is also worth highlighting that when the consumers encounter ethical dilemma, such as overspending and wrongdoing, they are aware of those actions and try to use a sense of moral self to guide themselves. However, in some cases it was found that the consumers monitor their ethical consumption behaviours intuitively as self-monitoring is activated from the inner self. This happens when

the moral self and moral salience are internalised within the self, which in turn ethical concerns is expressed more automatically through consumption.

Furthermore, self-monitoring appears to have control over ethical consumption regarding the foreseen consequences (as detailed in section 5.4). This involves both the physical attributes and symbolic values that the ethical consumption can offer to consumers. For instance, *Panya* sees both healthy and social benefit from growing and consuming organic food. These benefits motivate and monitor *Panya* to engage in such behaviour.

With respect to self-monitoring in the self-ethics relationship, it can be seen that the consumer's expressive behaviour is monitored by both the psychological and social constructs that are the inner self and social cues. This is in line with the notion of self-monitoring suggested by Synder (1974) that is based on a social psychological construct to guide the behaviour by situational cues to social appropriateness. Synder (1974) considered this guided behaviour as "socially appropriate behaviour, which can be viewed closely to the ethical behaviour in this thesis. Taken together, this study has extended the role of self-monitoring into the ethical consumption context, in which consumer's self and moral needs to be guided (in some cases) in order to consume ethically.

As indicated, consumers in the current study have been more conscious with ways of living and consumption, influenced by religiosity. Conversely, when consumers hold these religious beliefs into the inner self with moral salience, ethical consumption behaviour appears to be more intuitively. Some consumer cases have highlighted that they engage in ethical consumption without being aware that they are concerned about the ethical issues (e.g. animal welfare and fairness). "Emotion" also plays crucial part on this intuitive behaviour.

7.1.6 Ethical consumption as conscious and intuitive consumer behaviour

Different contexts of ethical consumption have been found in this thesis and from these contexts consumers behave in both conscious and intuitive ways. Taking into account conscious behaviour emerging in this study, being thoughtful, for example, has brought the consumer to engage in ethical consumption, in a voluntary simplicity context. In this sense, being thoughtful is considered as moral identity that is affected by religious teachings. Also, being self-reliant is influenced by religiosity, particularly in the Thai (Buddhism) context. This has taught people to balance their lives, to live consciously, and in turn to consume moderately based on Buddhist ethics (i.e. the middle way or moderation concept). This could be the key rationale that conscious consumer behaviour is seen in this study.

It is also worth noting that ethical consumption behaviour has shown varying degrees of flexibility. In this respect, emotion and sense of self (including the moral self) come into effect. The current study suggests the idea that conscious consumers mostly are aware of their (ethical) actions and are willing to integrate those ethical concerns into their self-concept, however there is still some flexibility around their behaviour, depending on the inner voice, emotion, situational factors, and social influence.

Turning now to the inner self involving in the process, it can be seen that when the moral self central to one's self, it even encourages intuitive consumer behaviour. This result suggests that consumers do not always consciously or deliberately engage in ethical consumption as the ethical value has been embedded within the self, contrasted to Blasi's (1984) assumption on moral self and moral functioning.

7.2 Marketing and managerial implications

Consumers are one of the most significant and demanding stakeholders for most organisations as they insert demand for products and services. Organisations would not survive in today's competitive business environment without consumer support (Blackwell et al., 2006). The study on consumer ethics and consumer behaviour regarding ethical consumption to some extent lays out the knowledge of how consumers perceive ethics in consumption; how they relates themselves to such consumption; and how they engage and make ethical decisions.

By understanding consumers, and in this case the ethical consumers, organisations can analyse the targeted customers more properly. If organisations know about consumer beliefs and attitudes regarding ethical consumption, they will be able to know customer needs and satisfy those needs and preferences. This also yields a more effective marketing strategy on market segmentation – “the process of identifying groups of people who behave in similar ways to each other, but somewhat differently than other groups” (Blackwell et al., 2006, p.41). With respect to market segmentation, ethical consumers can be segmented by their lifestyles, concepts of the self and personal values that are: simple living, fairness, social concerns, nature, green living, and animal welfare. This would be useful, especially to the ethical and green market. However, it should be noted that each segment of ethical consumers has different concepts of self that links to ethical consumption. For example, consumers in a simple living group aim at being self-reliant and self-sufficient, so their consumption behaviour would be related to those affordable, natural, and locally sourced products (such as OTOP). Whereas, consumers

who purchase non-animal testing products, are more concerned about moral responsibility and animal welfare.

In this study emotions emerged as have a significant impact on the self, encouraging effortless consumer decision-making. It was also found that the desired self and undesired self are related to emotional response. By recognising these selves, marketers would be able to trigger some emotional involvement from consumers, particularly in ethical consumer market. In so doing, marketing strategists need to recognise and understand the desired (positive) self and the undesired (negative) self that are associated with meanings of ethical consumption. These would provide them the insights of the types of a person that are desirable and undesirable, which in turn it helps them to develop positive brand image that is in line with the desire self. On other hand, marketers should ensure that the brand or product does not tap into the undesired self of the customers that can result in negative brand image. Moreover, the findings in this study can throw light on how the moral self and the moral identity are constructed in relation to ethical consumption. So when marketing the ethical products (e.g. fairtrade products, organic products, OTOP, non-animal testing products), marketers can utilise this understanding to encourage a sense of moral self and the moral identity among consumers. In this respect, the current study suggests that when one's moral self-image aligns with certain product image, that has similar meaning to one's moral self-image, it is likely that the consumer will purchase that ethical product. This is called "self-ethics congruency" in this thesis.

Another implication is the policy that aims to encourage ethical behaviour among consumers in the society. The policy maker or the Thai government can

utilise the knowledge from this study. Gaining the insights of the moral self of consumers, the government would be able to design more appropriate supporting activities that can help to promote ethics in the social environment. It was highlighted in this study that religiosity has influenced Thai consumers in terms of their beliefs, personal values, and importantly the self-concept (including the moral self and the moral identity). Also, Vitell and Paolillo (2003) pointed out that religiosity is a key to consumer values and moral beliefs. Taken together, the Thai government and the social development organisation should consider integrating “religion” into their programmes as to cultivate moral values and beliefs among Thai consumers. This together with social influences (e.g. significant others) can provoke a sense of moral self within the person. This thesis and Vitell et al. (2009) indicated that religiosity is an antecedent of morality and the moral identity. Then, having religion taught in our society with social support (such as family, school, social services), it could help consumers to develop moral identity within the self, leading to ethical consumption behaviour.

In the Thai Buddhist context, the role of religiosity has taken a significant part in ethical consumption behaviour, this in turn opens the opportunity for businesses targeting, such as the green market, locally sourced products, and other ethical products in different sectors. Having the knowledge of the moral self would be a key issue to understand ethical consumer. From this thesis, ethical consumers tend to ask or look for senses of “responsibility”, “thoughtfulness”, and “good deeds” (linked to religious values and Buddhist ethics) from organisations. With this in mind, it enables organisations to extend their businesses to “ethical market” in order to respond to those needs. Ethical products, such as fairtrade and organic food, non-animal testing cosmetics, OTOP, and hybrid cars would

be able to match consumer's moral self while satisfying the need for moral responsibility. For instance, organisations, which do the marketing of non-animal testing cosmetic, might highlight that this cosmetic can help consumers to sustain Dhamma – one of the five precepts. In turn, this product could be perceived among consumers as means to avoid killing animal and to express their ethical concerns to others. Herein, this study would suggest is that at least some consumers can bring ethical concerns into their consumption choices, but they still want some help from businesses.

On the other side, it is a call to bring better ethical behaviour on the part of business to encourage ethical behaviour among Thai consumers. This suggests that rather than consumers requesting or approaching businesses for ethical behaviour, it may be another way around. It is the time for businesses to show their ethical behaviour as a good example of ethics in a consumer religious culture. In such a strong religious social environment, when businesses adopt those religious values and meanings together with an understanding of ethical consumers' self, this can be considered as one of their core competency. In this thesis, it is apparent that consumers reflect their ethical thinking on what they have experienced or seen in a real life. Being as an ethical or pro-social corporate would facilitate favourable feelings towards companies in today's ethical consumerism. In turn, businesses can play a role to shape consumers' moral self and moral meanings from which the consumers are prone to engage in ethical consumption.

Unethical or ethically questionable consumer behaviour is considered as one of the important problems for the country and business organisations. The purchase of counterfeited products, for example, was found to be related to

consumer's ethical perspective (Chaudhry and Stumpf, 2011). With the ethical campaign or the government project, a sense of moral self needs to be encouraged wherein awareness of moral problems should be educated in the society. By promoting ethical concern through an individual's self, it would make them to realise what he or she ought to do that in turn reduces a chance of ethically questionable behaviour. Nonetheless, this study has recognised that ethical consumption behaviour is not always consistent to one's moral self. Sometimes, consumers encounter a moral dilemma (Rest, 1986). In this respect, self-monitoring together with religious guiding power can help to guide the self and ethical consumption behaviour, by bridging between consumer's moral self and ethical behaviour. Other Asian countries could learn from the Thai context on consumer ethics and (to some extent) apply to their contexts.

7.3 Limitations

This thesis has encountered several challenges during different research stages. As this study chooses purposeful sample targeting individuals who have experienced ethical consumption, it was found that ethical consumption in Thailand is quite a new concept. This caused the study some difficulty to find the research participants that show real engagement in ethical consumption. There was a screening process of the recruitment to ask if the person has been experiencing ethical consumption. Yet, in some case the participants who have some direct experiences with ethical consumption, for example the organic food, could not actually show their ethical values and did not openly talk about themselves and such experiences. Hence, the self could not be explored in detail; the study needed to recruit some other participants to be studied. With time and resource constraints, the current study includes 10 ethical consumers

to explore the meaning of ethical consumption in relation to the self-concept, in which it is able to gain rich descriptions of consumer lived experiences. The study has reached a point of data saturation where no new meanings can be found, however, other values of ethical consumption experience through the self might exist among other patterns of ethical consumption.

This thesis is appreciated the phenomenological research approach as it allows a deeper exploration and meanings of consumer experiences (i.e. essence of lived experiences) to be captured. However, each research methodology has its own limitations. The findings in this study were contextualised and interpretive, based on a small number of ethical consumers. As recognised, this has brought the current study to have some issue of 'generalise thematic findings' (Szmigin et al., 2009) to a large number of population group of ethical consumers. Yet, what this study is intended to conduct is that it aims to advance the conceptual and theoretical understanding of the self and ethical consumption phenomenon "without making universalising claims" (Thompson and Arsel, 2004, p.640). Regarding the challenge of generalising thematic findings, the study is aware of this issue, but it is not the main purpose of this study. This is because the self-ethics relationship was found to be context-specific that needs to be focused on its exhaustive descriptions. In this regard, Denzin (1983, p.133) rejected the generalisability and argued that "every instance of social interaction, if thickly described, represents a slice from the life world," which is a matter that should be focused.

As exploring the influence of 'religiosity' on one's moral self and ethical consumption, Thailand is recognised to be an appropriate research setting to study as Thai people have placed high values to religion. However, Buddhism is

considered to be highly dominated among the Thai consumers in this study. The current study has gained insights of religiosity from ten consumers, in which nine of them are Buddhist and the other one is Christian. This limits the study to be able to explore the religiosity from varied religious contexts.

“Emotion” has been highlighted in this study that it is one significant part of the self. It is related to dimensions of the self-concept that are the desired (positive) self and the undesired (negative) self. Emotions were identified that with positive emotions (e.g. happy, satisfied, joy, proud), it links to the desired self and encourages ethical consumption behaviour. In contrast, negative emotions (e.g. sad, ashamed, guilty) link to the undesired self that in turn motivates the consumers to avoid unethical behaviour. From these findings, emotions have been contextualised by classification: positive and negative. This, however, limits the current study to explore the possibility of mixed emotions (limited by its nature of the approach), as positive and negative emotions are considered exclusively experienced (Andrade and Cohen, 2007). The extent to which emotions are classified as positive and negative in this study is based on similarities of certain emotion, or namely the categorical approach (Watson and Spencer, 2007).

7.4 Directions for future study

It remains the role of the researcher to point out what appears to have discovered that are significant for further study. As discussed earlier, other values might exist in other contexts of ethical consumption that can enhance our understanding of the self-concept and ethics relationship. Cherrier (2007, p.225) pointed out that examining ethical consumption involves a series of consumption patterns, in which it “carries a plurality of ethical stances that

range from environmentalism to solidarity to fair trade to health to community support.” The current study also found that in each context of ethical consumption provides a specific description of the experience. Therefore, future research should attempt to examine a greater case of ethical consumers, regarding contexts of their consumption behaviours. As ethical consumption is contextual in this study, different cases of ethical consumption would give some meanings to structure of ethical consumer behaviour.

The search for additional insights into the broader picture of ethical consumer behaviour, impacted by the self and religiosity is made possible by adding variety of religion. Future research should be devoted towards including the impact of religiosity on the self and ethical consumption from a greater context of religion, for example from various religious beliefs – Buddhism, Christianity and Muslim. Subsequently, cross-cultural studies between similar and different religious values can be generated.

From the phenomenological research viewpoint, it has facilitated the current study to provide the new emergent meanings and the essence of the experience studied. This widens concepts of self focusing on the actual experiences of ethical consumption. Consumer and consumer ethics studies, therefore, should provide more insights from a first-person experience perspective. Also, this study has explored the meanings of ethical consumption in relation to the self, by which the symbolic values emerged from the findings. Ethical consumption is considered as a kind of symbolic consumption that gives meanings to itself beyond the tangible and functional value; further research might need to focus particularly on the symbolic meanings associated with such consumption context. With the symbolic meanings, further study might view on

how and to what extent these meanings lead to consumer behaviour in the ethical context. It is also of interest to examine the symbolic meaning of ethical consumption from both private and public perspectives. From this standpoint, Richins (1994a), for example, makes a distinction between the public and private meanings of possession. Meanings would play a role in a communication process between the self and consumption; and with the existential-phenomenological approach meanings of experience should be focused.

Furthermore, the findings highlight that conscious and intuitive consumer behaviour are involved in ethical consumption. These two approaches of consumer behaviour have some distinctions in terms of the motives and condition. Conscious consumer behaviour is related to rational (e.g. cognitive, logical) elements whilst intuitive consumer behaviour is more related to non-rational elements (e.g. emotions). However, the non-rational approach has not gained enough attention, particularly in the ethical context. Mann and Abraham (2006) called for further investigation of emotion in ethical decision-making or its role in ethical consumption activities. Szmigin et al. (2007) and Cherrier (2007) also suggested further study on ethical consumers' shared concerns based on desire and emotion. Further work might need to focus more on the non-rational elements, as the current study also indicates the relationship between emotion, the self, and intuitive response in ethical consumption behaviour. Yet, emotions have been explored in this thesis only from the part of the processes of internalisation and externalisation between the self and ethical consumption.

As the multidimensional self has emerged in this study, the self is viewed as dynamic and social-contextual dependent in the context of ethical consumption.

The self is internalised and externalised in the processes, based on psychological and social constructs. This could imply that the self is flexible and moving along the continuum between internal and external values. So the self can be extended and changed in this context. This study suggests that there is a need for further exploration of the extended self (Belk, 1988) with regard to consumer ethics or ethical consumption. This has thrown up some question that needs to be addressed in the future, such as 'how a (ethical) consumer goes beyond him- or herself'. Also, social interaction (e.g. significant others, living environment) has influenced the self-ethics relationship in which this study found it affects how one identifies themselves and search for social approvals for certain behaviour (such as sufficient or moderate consumption and less meat consumption). This means that the self-concept is affected by these social influences. Further study might examine the theoretical concept of 'inclusion of other in the self' (IOS) (Aron et al., 1992). This would allow future study to focus more on external or social impact onto the self and ethical consumption patterns.

Lastly, in particular with the Thai context, it would be interesting to conduct further exploration on the context of voluntary simplicity in relation to the moral self and the moral identity. This focuses on deeper and insightful meanings of consumer experiences, based on the existential-phenomenological research approach. This context of ethical consumption is seen to be relevant among Thai consumers, in which the religiosity has played its significant role to the self (the moral self and the moral identity) and ethical behaviour (e.g. simple living, moderate consumption).

7.5 A closing remark

This study has explored the role of the self-concept on ethical consumption, where religiosity has been given a significant value in the Thai consumer context. It advances an understanding of how the self is shaped and affected through processes of internalisation and externalisation, based on psychological and social constructs, in relation to ethical consumption behaviour. The ontology used in much of the current study adheres to the existential-phenomenological approach, which allows consumer experiences and meanings to be captured and ultimately addressed about 'who they are', 'what makes who they are' and 'what makes them consume ethically'.

This thesis has come to the conclusion that ethical consumption experiences are neither a response to a fixed form of rules and code of conducts imposed on individuals nor a pure cognitive and rational moral judgement on ethical issues. Rather, these experiences are conditions and outcomes of the interactions between one's self-concept and ethical consumption, representing the self as experiencer and moral entity; in that the self is internalised and externalised ethical values and symbolic meanings. As the self is a moral entity, moral meaning (as understood with respect to Buddhist ethics and religious values) is formed from one own actions who is living a good, healthy and ethical life. As Buddhist ethics is integrated into the self, morality to the self can be developed, or in short, the moral self. Through the self-ethics relationship, the moral identity is developed from Buddhist ethics, moral self, religiosity, and lived experiences. Turning now to one of the most crucial influences, religiosity has added more insights of one's moral, the self, and ethical consumer behaviour. It helps to

bring the ethical values internalised and externalised between the self and consumption.

One of the interesting findings to emerge from this study is that ethical consumption involves conscious and intuitive consumer behaviour. Consumers have experienced both rational (e.g. consequences, benefits gained, moral reasoning) and non-rational (e.g. emotions, desire, inspiration) elements, in which this leads to some flexibility around such behaviour. What comes to attention in this study after the findings is the non-rational consumer behaviour as the self is apparently seen through emotions. Also, when emotion is integrated to the self, it encourages even effortless and automatic consumption behaviour. However, it is worth stressing that the self in relations to ethical consumption is dynamic and contextual-dependent that provides meanings of this phenomenon by consumers subjectively experienced and engaged in ethical consumption activities.

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Appendix A: Summery of self-concept six paradigms

Summary of Self-Concept Paradigms				
Paradigm/ Author(s)	Definition of Self-Concept	Relevant notion(s) of Self-Concept	Key Aspect(s) of the Paradigm	Researched issues in a Consumption Context
1. Introspection				
James (1980)	Self as the "global self" - differentiated aspects of the same person: Pure experience (I), Content of that experience (Me). Self is the sum total of all that a man/woman can call his/hers.	Self-totality. Self-feeling. Self-completion: the self and self-defining goals.	Multifaceted assumption. Self is viewed from a macro approach; very broad interpretation. Rooted in philosophical discipline.	Possession (Belk, 1988). Product symbolism (Levy, 1959; Tucker, 1957).
Allport (1955)	Life is regarded as intimately and essentially ours.	Self-enhancement. Self-extension. Self-esteem.	Behaviour is motivated to enhance one's self-image. View from macro perspective: Does not lay out specifics.	Product meaning and product/brand image (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; Grubb and Hupp, 1968; Grubb and Stern, 1971).
Cattell (1950)	Self as a core of personality.	Relationship between self and personality. Self-consistency.	Very broad theory.	Values, attitudes, and lifestyles (Kassarjan, 1982; Bates and Mitchell, 1995).

Partially derived from Reed (2002)

Summary of Self-Concept Paradigms (Continued)				
Paradigm/ Author(s)	Definition of Self-Concept	Relevant notion(s) of Self-Concept	Key Aspect(s) of the Paradigm	Researched issues in a Consumption Context
2. Behaviourism				
Skinner (1953, 1978, 1987)	The self refers to a repertoire of behaviours directed by a history of environmental contingencies.	Self-maintenance, self-management.	Self is viewed as a reactive self: behavioural environmental responses. Self is located at the intersection of different external contingencies of reinforcement: positive/reward self-reinforcement, negative self-reinforcement.	Receiving rewards from significant others as a positive stimuli of the product purchased (Martin and Pear, 1996).
3. Psychoanalysis				
Freud (1923, 1946)	Self as the outcome of intrapsychic conflict and the output of an individual's unconscious forces: drives, instincts, needs, and impulses. Self as a set of processes – perceiving, thinking – that underlies the content of consciousness and distinguishes reality from imagination.	Self-control.	Personality as a core to control impulses and drives. Behaviour is highly influenced by unconscious motives and fantasies deep within the individual's private world. Irrational human behaviour is recognised.	Special consumption experiences: impulse buying (Rook, 1987; Phau and Lo, 2004) and extreme luxury products (Franck and Lester, 2004).

Partially derived from Reed (2002)

Summary of Self-Concept Paradigms (Continued)				
Paradigm/ Author(s)	Definition of Self-Concept	Relevant notion(s) of Self-Concept	Key Aspect(s) of the Paradigm	Researched issues in a Consumption Context
4. Social-Cognition				
Sarbin (1952), Mischel(1977), Kihlstrom and Kleine (1994)	Self as a conceptual system processing information about the self.	Self-schemas: knowledge structure developed to understand, integrate, or explain one's behaviour in a particular domain.	Self is treated as a conceptual or knowledge structure in an individual's memory. Focused hypotheses and easy to lead to testable proposition. Behaviours are more reactive or passive to incoming information.	Self/image product/image congruity theory (Sirgy, 1982): self-image and product-image are projected from memory. Self-schemas and advertising context (Hogg and Garrow, 2003).
5. Phenomenology				
Rogers (1951), Lewin (1936), Raimy (1948), Snygg and Combs (1949), Combs and Soper (1957)	Self as a selective filter derived from personal meanings an individual attaches to his/her perceptions and experiences; from the external and internal world.	Self-perception. Self-reference. Self-maintenance.	Self can only be inferred as no one can observe a real self directly; one's perception must be considered. Focus is on the individual's perception of reality, not reality itself.	Applied to symbolic consumption in a plastic surgery context (Schouten,1991).

Partially derived from Reed (2002)

Summary of Self-Concept Paradigms (Continued)				
Paradigm/ Author(s)	Definition of Self-Concept	Relevant notion(s) of Self-Concept	Key Aspect(s) of the Paradigm	Researched issues in a Consumption Context
6. Symbolic Interactionism				
Cooley (1902)	Self as a "looking-glass self" – a reflexive mirror born out of the interaction with the individual's social milieu.	Social identity.	<p>Social self – a component of self, in the way that people see themselves through the eyes of others and form self-concept via the reactions of others.</p> <p>More external viewpoint.</p> <p>Social interaction is a key of one's self and behaviour.</p>	Product consumption as a social stimuli (Solomon, 1983). Social identity and consumer behaviour (Reed, 2002).

Partially derived from Reed (2002)

Appendix B: Information pack for research participants

Information Pack

Interview on Ethical Consumption

Dear Respondent,

Thank you for deciding to take part of in my PhD research interviews. I am a research student at the University of Bradford, School of Management and I am currently conducting the interviews to explore ethical consumption through one's self-concept, focusing on morality, experiences on ethical consumption, and religion.

During the interview/conversation the information you provide will be audio-recorded, in which it will be fully confidential and will only be used for academic purposes. The interview will take approximately 1 to 2 hours.

For further information you may need, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Nattida Srisaracam

Doctoral Researcher

University of Bradford, School of Management

Email: N.Srisaracam@student.bradford.ac.uk

Ethical Considerations

During the interview procedures, a strict ethical code of conduct will be considered and followed different considerations:

- *Protect the identity of the respondents who is participating in the conducting research.* Pseudonyms will be used to disguise data collected, ensuring that the respondents in the research are able to present their true feelings and opinions;
- *Protect the data collected.* The data will only be seen initially by a limited number of academic staff with the findings contributing to my PhD thesis. However, in the future it may be that elements of the findings contribute towards an academic paper to be published in a leading Consumer Behaviour journal. If this happens consent will be gained from participants, and again their identity will be disguised;
- *Ensure that participants are fully aware of the aims of the project,* in everyday language. No trick questions will be presented.
- *Obtain the consent from the participants prior the interview conducted*
- *Cause no physical or psychological harm to those participating in the research.*

A consent form will be initially issued the participants after they agreed to take part in my research interview in order to gain access to the data given and/or home visit.

Appendix C: Consent form

Consent Form

University of Bradford School of Management,
Emm Lane,
Bradford,
BD9 4JL,
www.bradford.ac.uk/management
N.Srisaracam@student.bradford.ac.uk

Dear _____,








Thank you for showing an interest in my PhD research and for agreeing to participate. In order for you to fully consent to be involved, and agree to participate, I would be grateful if you could read the statements below and sign this form. These statements briefly detail what your involvement will entail, and what you can expect as a result of taking part. Please note that you will have your own rights to make decisions to attend the interview, which will not cause any consequences.

Should you have any further queries, or if you would like to contact me in any way for further information or clarification, then please feel free to do so. My contact details are given at the top of this form.

Best wishes

Nattida Srisaracam

I agree to take part in Nattida Srisaracam's study, and I understand that:

-  I will need to meet with Nattida, at a convenient time, and on agreed dates;
-  I will talk with Nattida about my experiences, feeling, and perception on ethical consumption;
-  The meetings will be audio recorded to help Nattida transcribe our discussions;
-  Pseudonyms will be used to conceal my personal identity
-  I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, and withdraw from the data collection process;
-  The results of this study may be published in academic journals and elsewhere,
although pseudonyms will again be used;
-  I can ask Nattida about the study, and for clarification if needed;

I consent to taking part in this study. I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time, for whatever reason, and that if I do I shall inform Nattida as quickly as possible.

Signature:

Name and Address:

Date:

Appendix D: Extended Ploynatda case

Family influence on the self and ethical consumption

Ploynatda: The one who took care of me was my grandmother and my aunt. They did not teach me everything on how to do things, which one is right or wrong all the time, but the way of who I am, is because I have absorbed from them, because I grew up with them, learning from what they've done. As for a kind hearted person, I also got that from my grandmother, because my grandmother likes to go to the temple and makes merit, believes in the religion, believes in the good deeds and kamma. I think I am a good person, a kind-hearted and sympathetic person, but not too sympathetic in everything, depending on the situation of what happening and see that with reason if it's proper and reasonable. For example, if I see beggars, it is not that I will help all of them, but I need to consider whether they are here because of what or there is a gang of muggers brought them here. If that is so, then I will not help. I will not give them the money, because it's considered as a support to have more of such gang and it's wrong. I will help by giving them food instead of money, but on the other hand if there is a very old lady, merely blind, but making flower bouquet instead of begging, I will help this type of people. I sometimes, buy all their flowers, sometimes bought two, but give some extra money, even though I don't know what to do with those flowers, but if I see this, I will buy. I think the way I am is by being absorbed from those who took care of me, because my grandmother and my aunt have done the same things.

Interviewer: So, your grandmother and your aunt are the most two important persons who can affect who you are. Is there anyone else that also influences you and the way you consume ethically?

Ploynatda: For now, I have my partner, my life partner. We have been living together for almost seven years now. He is a very good person; likes to study, never misbehave and I've absorbed good things from him since we have been together. I think he makes me a better person and I think now I'm behaving just like him [laughing], but in a good way. He makes me like more mature, patient, and future-oriented, because what I'm doing now will affect my future. I've learnt from my partner a lot, I would say, I've learnt that I have to live on the norm of the society. I must be good to have a good future for my love ones and for myself. I've learnt the life with more straight line, well plan and discipline. It's like I have received love and attention from another person who is not even my real family, but fulfilled each other. Other than my grandmother and my aunt, I have him to fulfil my life. So, I would say people that help to shape me to be me today are my family, my partner and my own experiences.

Interviewer: And how did he influence you in ethical consumption?

Ploynatda: I used to study in the UK like I told you before. It was when I started to like to drink organic tea. I tried it for the first time and then now I have my organic tea everyday. Yes... I started to know and try organic tea because of my partner, he was my boyfriend back then in the UK. In that time we lived together, like we shared house. And he loves to drink organic tea very much. But I had never tried any tea apart from Chinese tea, before I went to study abroad. When I knew this kind of tea from him which he loves drinking it regularly, I then had a chance to try.

Interviewer: Are they part of your motivation to choose ethical consumption?

P23: Yes, they are one big part of my motivation. They are the people close to me and who I love. I care for them. Like, my grandmother is very old now, I want her to have only healthy and good food. I usually buy organic food for her and myself. We love to spend time having tea together and talk a lot of things. It's our time, me and my grandmother; and sometimes my aunt joins us. Definitely, she has taken part in my purchasing choice to choose organic products for her. And it's also good for our world, apart from my family. Then, my partner and I, we love organic food now. It's good for our health and we love to eat salad. And the organic vegetables are a safe choice to eat. We cook at home and we try to find many organic ingredients from supermarket as we can, but sometimes we couldn't find some organic ingredients that we want.

Appendix E: Extended Panya case

Role models influencing the self and ethical consumption

Panya: When I began to seriously study the idea of His Majesty that relates to sufficiency economy, I started to be interested in it. Well, if I try to do it, my life should be better. Because at that time, I started to get sick, like very sick, and was going to quit my job, I feel bored and didn't want to work as a banker anymore. But, you know If I'm still at BBAC (Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives) my salary would be 120,000 baht with bonus every 6 months, about 700,000 baht at a time. I would have more than double salary comparing to what I have now. But, I am here at the foundation working on the project of organic farming and plants under the sufficiency economy concept, my salary is about 20,000 - 30,000 baht but it has changed my life in a good way and it's more secured for me. I think it is a permanent life security. Let's say, if I'm still working at BBAC, I wouldn't have knowledge about the self-sufficiency. In the end, I will be like my friends that when they are retired, they are just sitting and sleeping at home. I will be like staying at home feeling lonely, do nothing and can't help to make a better society. That's is so worthless. Actually, what I got from the concept of His Majesty is long term wealth and long term happiness in all life aspects. Now people in our society are focusing too much on the idea of capitalism. They measure the development with GDP and money and object. So they focus on the consumerism. They destroy a beautiful nature and are willing to do or change anything for money no matter if it's going to destroy the forest, soil, water or air. They create more pollution and they don't care about it. They care of what can provide them money. And with this concept, people are taking advantages by producing a lot, selling expensive,

reducing their costs, getting a lot of profits and even taking advantages from each other, from us. It seem like they care only to gain benefits and don't care what it has been destroyed. They are not self-sufficiency and being more selfish.

Interviewer: What has the King's concept brought to you?

Panya: I always tell my subordinates to "walking step by step, taking things one at a time". This is similar to the modern management principles that His Majesty used it to develop what is called modern science that can help in nature management. The key concept of His Majesty is the practice of moderation and it fits well in the Thai society and my life. It accepts modern knowledge, places the importance of history and culture, and cares of nature. If we compare to stringed instruments, the capitalism is a loosed string, undisciplined and destroyed almost everything. The loosed stringed instruments can't be played. The communist is too tight. It doesn't allow people to collect anything. Everything is public. The tighten stringed instruments will break; hence, can't be played. His Majesty uses fit or effective stringed instruments. His Majesty has thought about this for a long time. He sees what will happen with the capitalism and what will happen to socialism. He focuses on the development while preserving those Thai traditions and culture and he uses dharma to help to do this, and this is what the moderation or middle path is about.

Appendix F: Extended Umapon case

Family Influence on the self and ethical consumption

Umapon: I listen to him (father) because he is a kind like, well, he always tries to have me to eat vegetables. Sometimes I don't want to have it but I feel I should have it. I usually have some organic fruits and green smoothie mixed with oats or chia seeds, some salad and coffee every morning at home. My mother usually buys natural herbal toothpaste that has not been tested on animals. She also likes to use one Tambon one products (OTOP). She likes them a lot. Well, she doesn't quite use plastic bags. She uses cloth bags. I've grown up like this. Both my dad and mom, so I, well, get used to it and I even notice that as I'm getting older, I'm becoming just like them. Well, my dad likes to give merit. I think what I have got from him is being generous and like to do merit. My dad likes to donate to tip boxes to poor children and disabled people something like that. He always does. I, myself, also do that. We also help to save, like, energy; at home we turn off things that are unnecessary. For water, we put it in buckets, not drain it out.

External society and ethical behaviour

Interviewer: So assuming that most of the society said this is good. What would you do?

Umapon: I believe in myself first, not all, but I ask myself first. Then, I look at what I believe and the others believe. Do I think a lot different from them? Can this different thinking lead to the wrong direction or bad results? I will come back and look at myself if what I think is wrong or not.

Interviewer: In the case that what you have done and other people in the society told you that it's wrong, you shouldn't have done that. Are you going to do something about your behaviour?

Umapon: I need to see if it is serious, and if it is actually wrong or not. Because I feel that if it doesn't cause any problem to other people and people are not affected from what I've done, then it's fine with me to do that. I will insist to do that; no matter what that person will see me. If it's good for me and it doesn't cause anyone trouble, I will do it.

Social influences and self-monitoring in ethical behaviour

Interviewer: What criteria do you use when reminding yourself to ethics?

Umapon: It's similar to things that we have learnt since I was young. Things that I have been fostered, also religion, teaching from parents, learning behaviour from people around me, like my friends or behaviours of other people. Like, when I saw them doing something bad, I was like hey! That thing is bad, I shouldn't do it. I learn from experiences and environment, like people.

Interviewer: So, it's not specifically only yourself. Is society be part to remind yourself?

Umapon: Hmm... if I see that it's not right, I recognise that this is not good. So, I don't do it, but when other people in the society do it, it is a lesson for me to see what the results are. I study from our society. It is both good and bad examples. They help me to try to make myself even better because good examples can be seen in real life where I'm living.